

# Islands

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NEW  
NONSTOP  
FLIGHTS  
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# EASY & BERMUDA • FLORIDA KEYS • ANTIGUA EXOTIC

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October

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See it now before cruise  
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NEW ZEALAND

It's summer Down Under.  
Swim, hike, spy dolphins.

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March

BAHAMAS

Avoid spring breakers in  
the Out Islands.

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## The Naturalist

**E**very visitor to Cayman Brac is welcome to a free guided tour of the island courtesy of Nature Cayman. Thanks to the warm, affable Keino St. Aubyn Daley, every tour is different, and always comes with a surprise. It may be the 25 million-year-old caves and brown booby sightings that fill up the day. Or it could be a morning snorkel and a stop at a local's home for fried fish, fritters, and a few stories. It's choose-your-own-adventure, with a side of Caymankindness.



**Q** I don't know where my name came from. I've heard from some Filipino friends that my name means "mouse" in Tagalog.

**Q** I've been working with nature tourism since 2008. I used to be a mechanic. At first I was petrified to talk to people. And then I came the realization that I get paid to show off my home. That's pretty cool.



**Q** What's so special about Cayman Brac is everybody here is like a little big family. Every day we're driving around honking our horn or blinking our lights – just hailing people. We know everybody.

**Q** You know how you're not related to certain people, but those people still make you feel welcome, loved, and warm and fuzzy on the inside? That's Caymankind.

**Q** My favorite spots to show off are the lighthouse and Long Beach. Just sit down and watch the waves crash against the bluff. At the lighthouse, there's a cool breeze and no noise whatsoever.

**Q** Cayman Brac has a cave system that's 25 million years old. There are more than 100 caves here, and we're still discovering them. This cave was discovered only five years ago. It's called Nanny's Cave. At first they were going to call it Chandelier Cave because of all the stalactites and stalagmites. It looks like chandeliers on the ceiling. But nanny is a friendly Caymanian term. That's what the guy said to his work friend when he was on the excavator. He said, "Nanny, I found a cave."

**Q** Visitors are always amazed by the color of the water. One lady was on a dive boat. She said the water is so beautiful and colorful that she wanted to collect some in a vase. Of course she dipped it in the ocean and the water was clear. [Laughs.]

**Q** On my tour you'll see wildlife. Brown boobies and other types of birds, and maybe some iguanas. For some strange reason, I can never find them when I'm on tour. But when I'm off, they're all over the place.

**Q** When I take a vacation I stay here. There's a lot to do. If you have it all here, why go anyplace else, you know?



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This Bermuda boardwalk leads you right where you want to go: the pink sands of Church Bay Beach. Photo by robertharding.com.



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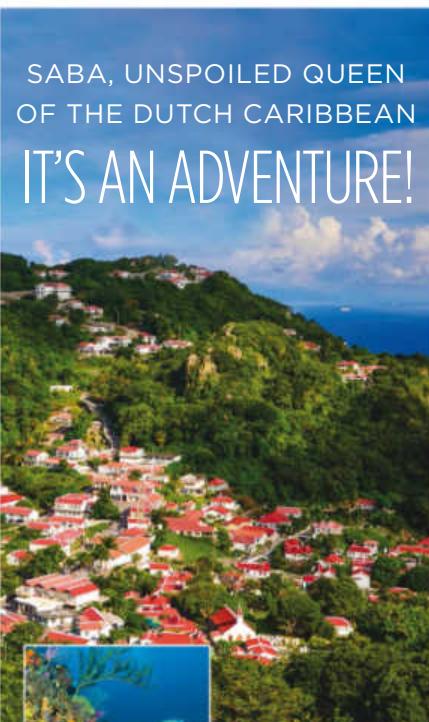
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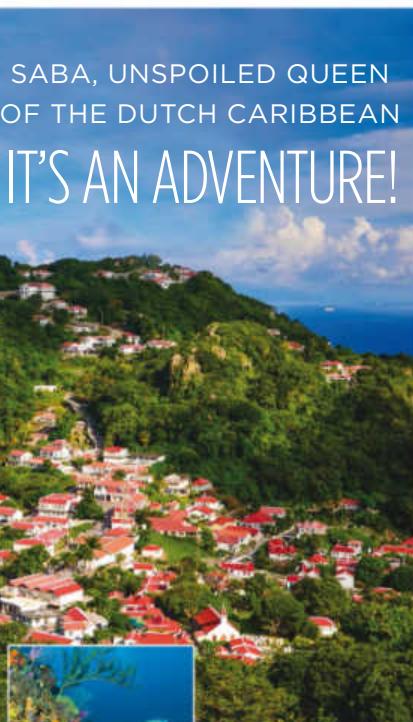
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IT'S BEEN SAID THAT PROGRESS IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT CHANGE, AND WITH THIS ISSUE OF *ISLANDS* — AND THOSE TO COME — YOU WILL SEE MANY CHANGES.

First, the overall look: You will notice new page designs and new graphic elements — the magazine will feel cleaner, fresher, more inviting. We've done some reorganization too; features will now live inside our three main sections — Get Here, Stay Here and Life Here — so you don't have to wait until the end of the book to dig into a meaty story.

We are also introducing new columns chock-full of must-read, timely info:

**Cruising** gives you the lowdown on the latest ships and itineraries, as well as the hottest onboard amenities; **Nonstop Flights** tells you who's flying where right now. And for foodies, **Food Remix** looks at how an iconic edible is interpreted around the world.

But perhaps the biggest change of all: We will be broadening our coverage beyond islands to include coastal destinations — so get ready to explore a whole host of places you haven't seen before in these pages.

I'm excited to begin a new chapter in my life too — I've relocated to Florida after 17 years in New York City — and I look forward to leading a publication that's been bringing you the most authentic travel experiences for more than three decades. Here's to the future.



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**CONTACT**  
[editor@islands.com](mailto:editor@islands.com)

  
Jennifer Ceaser  
Editorial Director

**NEW THIS ISSUE!**

Find the latest high-seas happenings in our *Cruising* column, and see how one dish is imagined around the world in *Food Remix*.



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TrevorT, New York

#### Isla Verde, Carolina

Had a great time with the family at Pine Grove beach in Isla Verde. Beautiful scenes, calm warm water, very clean and relaxing. I sat there just listening to the waves, taking in the joys of the kids. Nice long beach to take a stroll and relax the mind.

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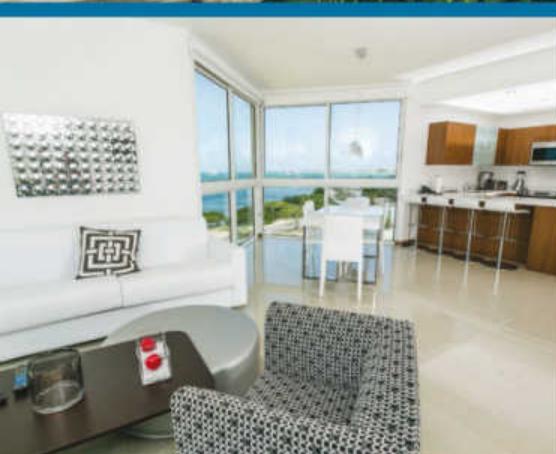
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# Islands®

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, TRAVEL GROUP  
Jennifer Ceaser  
jennifer.ceaser@bonniergecorp.com

GROUP PUBLISHER  
Laura Walker  
laura.walker@bonniergecorp.com

## EDITORIAL

SENIOR EDITOR Audrey St. Clair

DIGITAL CONTENT DIRECTOR Steve Spears

DIGITAL EDITOR Cami Webb

COPY EDITOR Carrie Riles

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Bronwyn Knight

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS & PHOTOGRAPHERS Jad Davenport, Amanda Jones, Jen Judge, David LaHuta, Brooke Morton, Sarah Sekula, Ann Vanderhoof, Matt Villano

## ART

ART DIRECTOR Jennifer Pileggi

PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR Lori Barbely

SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS Zach Stovall, Jon Whittle

## ADVERTISING

CARIBBEAN/MEXICO/EUROPE Paula Iwanski, Advertising Director, 407-571-4605; paula.iwanski@bonniergecorp.com  
UNITED STATES Kelly Freygang, 407-571-4743; kelly.freygang@bonniergecorp.com  
CARIBBEAN Julie Kittredge, 813-877-6959; julie.kittredge@bonniergecorp.com  
HAWAII Debbie Anderson, 808-739-2200; debbieanderson@dmhawaii.com  
HOTELS/VACATION RENTALS Jacki Kendall, 407-571-4542; jacki.kendall@bonniergecorp.com  
SENIOR ONLINE PRODUCER Jeff Williams, 407-571-4787; jeffrey.williams@bonniergecorp.com  
SALES COORDINATOR Tracey Voorhees, 407-571-4986; tracey.voorhees@bonniergecorp.com

VP, DIRECTOR OF BRAND STRATEGIES	Matt Hickman
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR	Shawn Bean
CREATIVE DIRECTOR	David Weaver
CONSUMER MARKETING DIRECTOR	Leigh Bingham
GROUP MARKETING DIRECTOR	Haley Bischof
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MARKETING MANAGERS	Oriana Avila, Mary Hannah Hardcastle

CORPORATE PRODUCTION DIRECTOR	Jeff Cassell
GROUP PRODUCTION DIRECTOR	Michelle Doster
SENIOR PRODUCTION MANAGER	Alison Klein
DESIGN SERVICES DIRECTOR	Suzanne Oberholtzer
GRAPHIC ARTISTS	Julia Arana, Jennifer Remias
HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR	Sheri Bass

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BUSINESS AND EDITORIAL OFFICES 460 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 200, Winter Park, FL 32789

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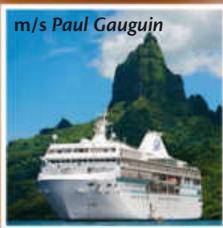
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*Paul Gauguin*  
CRUISES

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## YOU'VE BEEN



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2. @leslie\_parrott, #hammocktime
3. @somedaytrips, #greekhoneymoon
4. @honeymoonhangover, #readyfortheweekend #takingtheplunge
5. @leslie\_parrott, #Cozumel
6. @fifimackie, #youcanleadahorse

## YOU ASKED

**Q:** Relocating your pet to an island: How do you get everything you own — and your cat — over there? **Details!**

**A:** Specifics vary, but it can be time-consuming and expensive. Hawaii requires vaccinations, microchipping, blood work, and a five- to 120-day quarantine, which can cost \$165 to \$1,080 per pet. The USVI requires a health certificate from your vet and no quarantine. Check with the U.S. embassy in the country you're considering moving to for details.

## WE ASKED

SELFIE STICKS:  
YAY or NAY?

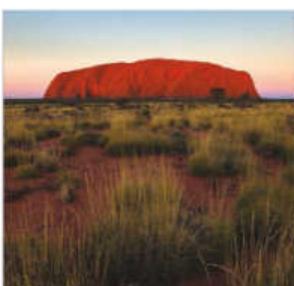
**85%**  
NAY

**Q:** What is your worst travel story?

**A:** We got stuck in the Baltimore airport during Snowmageddon and missed three days of our Jamaica vacation. Worst part was the bagpipers convention that was also stuck and kept playing all day.

## “EVER TRY TO BUY UNDERWEAR IN NASSAU? I LEARNED WHAT TO PACK IN MY CARRY-ON.”

— Steve Killinger, via Facebook



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## WE'VE BEEN

Watching the setting sun paint Australia's iconic sandstone rock formation Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock) with red light was a lifelong dream for me — and apparently about 20,000 other people. Nature's display was predictably beautiful and met with applause by throngs of ogling tourists, who then quickly left. The Milky Way slowly appeared in an even more spectacular scene than before, and finally I had all of it to myself. Patience has its rewards.

— Photographer Jon Whittle



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DANIEL THOMSON/GETTY IMAGES

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FLORIDA KEYS'  
10 BEST MILE  
MARKERS

## *New Zealand*

Timing is everything if you want to sail into Frenchman's Bay in Abel Tasman National Park. To make sure there's enough water in the tidal lagoon, get there two hours before or after high tide in your boat or kayak. Or see it from above on the Coastal Track, a 32-mile-long hike that weaves through forested hills and climbs around headlands. (It's one of New Zealand's nine "Great Walks.") Plan three to five days for the whole journey, and along the way, make friends with penguins, seals, dolphins, and native birds like tuis and fantails.



# NOW

## BONAIRE

Sure, September is the peak of Caribbean hurricane season. But Bonaire, known for great diving and **WINDSURFING**, is far enough south to fall outside the hurricane belt. Unlike its island neighbors to the east, which are still in their rainy season, Bonaire is all sun. September and October are the sweet spot before cruise shippers start arriving and hotel rates soar — perfect for finding a private stretch of pristine coral reef to spy on frogfish and **SEAHORSES**.

## IRELAND

Get your bivalves raw or fried and wash 'em down with Guinness or champagne at the **GALWAY OYSTER FESTIVAL**, Sept. 24-27. More than 3 million have been pried open since the festival started in 1954. Plus, the world's **best shuckers compete in the Oyster Olympics** here.

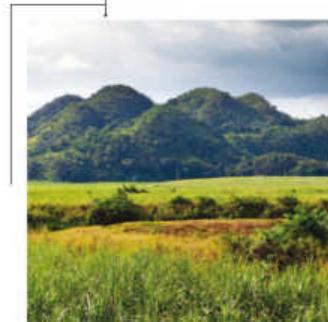
# DEC.

## TRINIDAD

Carnival in February is the island's biggest excuse to celebrate, but Christmas is a close second, and the Trinis are well into the swing of it by month's start. Foodies get to try December-only specialties such as pastelles, black cake and *ponche de crème* — a **HIGH-TEST EGgnog** made with overproof rum. And even Scrooges capitulate to carols played on steel pan and you-gotta-dance Christmas parang, with **MARACAS**, cuatros and a fast Latin beat.

## JAMAICA

The lush **BLUE MOUNTAINS** have just been declared the island's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. Some of the world's most coveted (and expensive) **COFFEE BEANS** are grown and hand-harvested on the steep



slopes. A bean-to-cup experience at one of the mountainside estates is just a day trip away from the laid-back Port Antonio.

## CUBA

Catch the **HAVANA JAZZ FESTIVAL**, Dec. 13-21, before the crowds pour in. Tip: Though there are ticketed theater performances, some of the best are in the intimate, rum-soaked clubs of the Vedado neighborhood.

# MAR

## EXUMAS, BAHAMAS

These 365 cays lie just 35 miles south of Nassau. On Staniel Cay, the yacht club has a handful of bungalows on stilts at the water's edge, as well as obliging kitchen staff who'll give you scraps to take to nearby Big Major Cay. This one is uninhabited — except for feral (but friendly) **SWIMMING PIGS**, who live on the beach and dog, er, pig-paddle out to greet visitors and beg a snack. Help them celebrate National Pig Day on March 1. Hint: They're fond of **WATERMELON** rinds.

## FIJI

Don't wear your finest threads in Fiji during Holi, the Festival of Colors, when the Indo-Fijian locals toss **COLORED POWDER** at one another to celebrate the arrival of spring. Dancing, singing and bonfires are also part of the late-March party, which is the least religious and most social of the Hindu holidays.

## MONTSERRAT

It's the only country besides Ireland where St. Patrick's Day is an official government holiday. The festivities last a full week, and locals wear their national dress — predominant color: green. Bars serve **GUINNESS** and green Heineken, along with rum punch. You'll get a **SHAMROCK STAMP** in your passport and a chance to try the national dish: goat water. Really, it's delicious.

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# NO PASSPORT REQUIRED

Forget those often pricey international flights and long customs lines, and get right to the beach. Here's how to save and splurge once you're there.

## PUERTO RICO

When the snow won't stop, adding some sun in your forecast is as easy as booking a seat. Puerto Rico is a major Caribbean hub, so nonstop flights are plentiful and affordable. Being a U.S. territory means your passport is safe at home and your favorite brew might be on tap.

**SAVE** Vieques doesn't charge see-and-be-seen prices. Even at the new El Blok (elblok.com), a curving concrete hotel with rooftop bar and plunge pool overlooking Esperanza, rooms start at \$160. Play on white-sand beaches in the

national reserve, and eat a cheap but delicious lunch of chicken pinchos at the Sol Food truck at its entrance.

**SPLURGE** Old San Juan's Festival of San Sebastian, held the third weekend in January, is a street party jumping with parades and hip-shaking salsa. Make home base the nearby La Concha Resort (laconcharesort.com). And though there's no shortage of authentic street food, slide into *Iron Chef* Roberto Trevino's Bar Gitano for tapas that will blow your mind. — *Zach Stovall*

Blue Beach, Vieques

ZACH STOVALL



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Four Seasons Hualalai

## HAWAII, BIG ISLAND

Perhaps only one nonstop destination can offer the traits of so many others. From a polar to tropical climate, the Big Island is a one-stop shop for location envy. Winter means clear skies for stargazing atop the snowcapped peak of 13,796-foot Mauna Kea, and November brings scores of humpback whales migrating from Alaska.

**SAVE** Base yourself at Kona Seaside Hotel (from \$110 a night, [konaseasidehotel.com](http://konaseasidehotel.com)), where free breakfast and a killer location come cheap. September through November means better room deals and fewer tourists, so live like the locals. First up: a serious buzz at the Kona Coffee Cultural Festival (Nov. 6-15), followed by a trek in Volcanoes National Park, where a \$10 bill gets you entry for a week. The hot spots (pun intended) are marked with trail maps at the Jaggar Museum, so head there first.

On the way home, hit up Da Poke Shack ([dapokeshack.com](http://dapokeshack.com)) for \$10 ahi and avocado poke that's served with a sunset.

**SPLURGE** No need to leave the resort for snorkeling. Just step outside your room to King's Pond, one of seven pools at the Four Seasons Hualalai (from \$795 a night, [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)). The 1.8 million gallons of "aquarium" carved from lava rock are home to sea turtles and eagle rays. Rinse off in your outdoor shower before exploring the highs and lows of the Big Island. Sure, you could hike to Akaka Falls or down to the coast, but ground-level views just don't cut it. Blue Hawaiian ([bluehawaiian.com](http://bluehawaiian.com)) offers aerials of the sky-high waterfalls of Waipio Valley and a peek into Kilauea, one of the most active volcanoes on Earth. —Cami Miller

### TRAVEL TIP

“For \$5 on St. Croix, get around on one of the shared vans, like Luck Be a Lady or Cruzan Dreams.”

SAYS CONTRIBUTOR BROOKE MORTON

## SANIBEL/CAPTIVA

Sleepy sister islands Sanibel and Captiva off Florida's Gulf Coast make Mayberry look rowdy. No high-rises. No traffic lights. Just small, colorful B&Bs and inns flanked by seafood shanties and shops full of everything seashell (yes, you need that reindeer ornament made entirely of coquina).

**SAVE** Winter's almost here. Let the only ice in your life be an ice-cream cone at Latté Da after a day of shell collecting. Home to 250 types of seashells, this is the No. 1 shelling destination in the world. Head to Blind Pass, as Sanibel gives way to Captiva, where a giant shell mound might just be Florida's tallest mountain. Sanibel and Captiva have an east-west orientation (as opposed to north-south like most islands), so the curve of the shoreline acts as a natural scoop for all the seashells that collect here. Find horse conchs, lightning whelk, tulip shells and sand dollars, as well as clam and oyster shells completely intact — just make sure you don't pick up a live one. Count 'em all up back at the Captiva Island Inn (from \$99 a night, [captivaislandinn.com](http://captivaislandinn.com)), a mere block from the beach, and order grilled grouper reubens from RC Otters next door to eat on the balcony of your cottage.

**SPLURGE** Splurging here means just a little more than \$200 a night, and that gets you a room in high season at the South Seas Island Resort, Captiva's swankiest property (beach villas from \$239 a night, [southseas.com](http://southseas.com)). This resort village sits on 2½ miles of talcum beach and 330 acres of wildlife preserve, so year-round residents here are great egrets, white ibis and bottlenose dolphins. Spy all of them on a sailing trip arranged by the resort to the satellite isle of Useppa (adults, \$40; kids under 12, \$25), a storybook town that drew power players like the Rockefellers and DuPonts in the '20s. Dinner is at Sanibel's beachfront Mad Hatter, where a sort of well-to-do whimsy sets the scene for dishes like goat-cheese pillows, coconut risotto and black-truffle sea scallops. Don't forget about those 2½ miles of beach back at the resort where you can walk off some of those calories before bed. —Audrey St. Clair

## USVI, ST. CROIX

St. Croix is the biggest of the three USVI, but it feels more like the middle child. It's not as high energy as St. Thomas or as sleepy as St. John. Year-round, all beaches are public and rarely crowded: You need nothing more than a towel to have fun — and snorkel gear to double it.

**SAVE** Stay at Hotel Caravelle (from \$75 a night, [hotelcaravelle.com](http://hotelcaravelle.com)) and skip the car rental — you're in the heart of Christiansted, St. Croix's bigger burg.

On the ground floor of this waterfront mainstay is Rum Runners, drawing a large local following thanks to consistent fare and heavy pours of Cruzan liquor in painkiller cocktails (guests of the hotel get 10 percent off).

**SPLURGE** The pool at Villa Mill Point (from \$5,900 a week, [villamillpoint.com](http://villamillpoint.com)) is perhaps the isle's best sunset-viewing perch. The other centerpiece of the hilltop hideaway is a 1700s sugar mill; from December to March, spot humpback whales from here.

— Brooke Morton



# MORE THAN A TRIANGLE

Formed by a volcano, Bermuda's collection of 138 islands make the perfect getaway for everything from superhero-style activities to cave-inspired massages.

BY SARAH SEKULA

## 1. SUNNY DAYS

Bermuda has about 43 public beaches and coves, so scoring your own stretch of sand is as easy as slipping on a pair of Bermuda shorts. Admiralty House Park is a prime picnic spot; because of the topography, don't be surprised if you spot locals doing triple backflips and double gainers off the limestone cliffs. After all, cliff jumping is a longtime tradition for Bermudians, and they love an audience.

## 2. CAVE COMFORTS

Get away from it all by heading underground into a subterranean limestone cavern at Grotto Bay's Natura Spa. Lucky limbs are lathered among the ancient stalagmites and stalactites of Serenity Cave, a 500,000-year-old relic hanging over a crystal-clear ocean-fed lake. Book the signature Natura massage, the perfect combo of Eastern and Western techniques. Then continue in sloth mode by taking a dip in the natural pool or downing a rum swizzle at Bayside Grill while you gaze at the Atlantic. [grottobay.com](http://grottobay.com)



**3. FRIED DELIGHT** Many say the fish sandwich at Art Mels Spicy Dicy is the best fish sandwich on Earth. A fit of exaggeration? Perhaps. But that's the kind of enthusiasm this meal provokes. Huge appetites will rejoice — fresh snapper flash-fried in soybean oil and served on raisin bread — because it's stacked about 5 inches high. One sammy will set you back \$11.50, but you won't need to eat dinner. Even celeb chef Marcus Samuelsson is a fan. Top it with cheese and coleslaw, and wash it down with a local Barritts ginger beer.



## 4. MASTERS AND MUSES

Had your fill of vitamin D? Pop into the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, where pieces like Georgia O'Keeffe's *Banyan Tree Trunk* and Winslow Homer's *Inland Water* hang above 1900s Brazilian hardwood floors. [bermudamasterworks.org](http://bermudamasterworks.org)

## 5. FLYBOARD FEVER

You'll feel like Iron Man when you strap a flyboard to your feet. This newfangled contraption looks a lot like a snowboard, but it's meant for the water. It goes something like this: The flyboard propels you into the air by water pumped through a hose connected to a Jet Ski. You steady yourself, let out a few *wheeees* and then plop back into the water. First-time flier? No worries. Coconut Rockets will teach you how to launch yourself 35 feet upward and master turns like a pro. [coconutrocket.com](http://coconutrocket.com)



FROM TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; GIOVANNI TAGINI/ALAMY



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BY SUE SANDERS

## GOOD CLEAN FUN

**WHERE: INDONESIA**  
**THE FIND: DIRTY ELEPHANTS**

At bath time, she lay sprawled in the warm water, eyes half-closed, as I gently washed mud from her leg. It was just like bathing a toddler — if my daughter had been an 8,000-pound Sumatran elephant.

Actually, my 15-year-old daughter Lizzie was by my side, carefully scrubbing the elephant's head. One wrong move by either of us could be lethal. We'd come to Tangkahan, a village in Sumatra's jungle, to wash elephants — part of a program to promote ecotourism. It was also the start of our first overseas mother-daughter trip. Because what

Indonesia is the world's largest producer of palm oil, and 70 percent of it is from Sumatra. This is destroying Sumatra's rainforests, home to critically endangered wild animals like elephants, orangutans and tigers.



teenage girl doesn't dream of cleaning humongous animals with her mom?

Sumatra, the world's sixth biggest island, is the largest of Indonesia's 17,000 islands. Tangkahan is a tiny village in the massive Gunung Leuser National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to several critically endangered animals, including orangutans and elephants. Illegal loggers and palm-oil plantations are destroying the surrounding jungle (palm oil is used in about half the packaged food products sold in the United States).

Lizzie and I first saw the elephants as we were signing our forms at the Conservation Response Unit office. They were standing in a marshy field behind what appeared to be a piece of twine — 11 elephants, all of them caked with mud.

Together with their *mahouts* (handlers), they patrol Gunung Leuser looking for illegal activity. They used to patrol three times a week but now do so only once thanks to Tangkahan's success with ecotourism. I was told men who'd previously been illegal loggers were now guides, as there's finally an incentive to protect the jungle — if it's chopped down, tourists won't come.

### TRAVEL TIP

You eat, give, receive and greet with the right hand. Say *maaf, kiri* ("pardon my left") if you forget.

SAYS OUR EDITORS

Lizzie and I follow the elephants to the river, keeping space between us and the 44 tons of pachyderm strolling in a line. I have no idea if elephants can run backward, so I keep a hand on Lizzie's shoulder, poised to push her out of the way in case one of these living bulldozers gets out of control.

It's a good thing we've kept our distance. Down near the river, the elephants pose a different kind of danger. "Jungle toilet," says a mahout, and I have to say, it really is a powerful display. Relieved, they lie down near the shore. Lizzie and I are handed scrub brushes. I tentatively approach the elephant Lizzie has chosen, a 42-year-old female named Agustina. It occurs to me that she might be one of the animals who was brought here for trampling local plantations.

"Trouble elephants," they've been called. The thought of a rebellious creature the size of an army tank has me rethinking this mom-daughter outing.

Agustina looks placid.

Lizzie looks vulnerable.

Does Agustina have any pent-up anger issues?

If she decides to stand up and crush us under one of her giant feet, what will her mahout realistically do? Run?

I look at Agustina, sprawled in the river, flapping her ears, splashing water. She really does need a good scrubbing. I exhale and move in with my brush. Lizzie follows. As we reach down to rub her, Agustina half-closes one eye and appears to be thoroughly enjoying the attention — and the exfoliation.

I'm buffing delicately, respectfully, as if cleaning crystal, when a voice breaks the mood.

"Scrub harder!" It's the mahout. Agustina's skin is tough with prickly long hairs, like legs that badly need to be shaved. It's similar to scouring a kitchen floor, if my floor could trample me.

When I eventually stand up, a man hands me Agustina's breakfast, a mixed bag of bananas, bamboo and squash. I can now say I've felt an elephant's tongue (squishy, muscular). Apparently, I'm feeding her too slowly because she grabs the remaining food with her trunk and shoves it into her mouth. As I wipe elephant sputtle off my arm, I glance at Lizzie.

"This is awesome!" she says.

Half her arm is in Agustina's mouth. Awesome.  **MORE TALES:** *islands.com*



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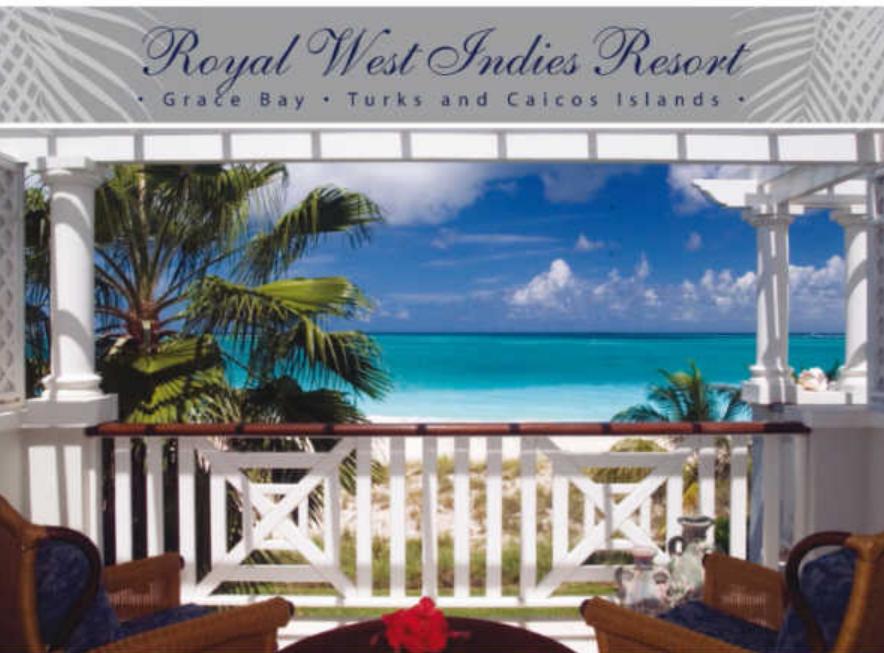
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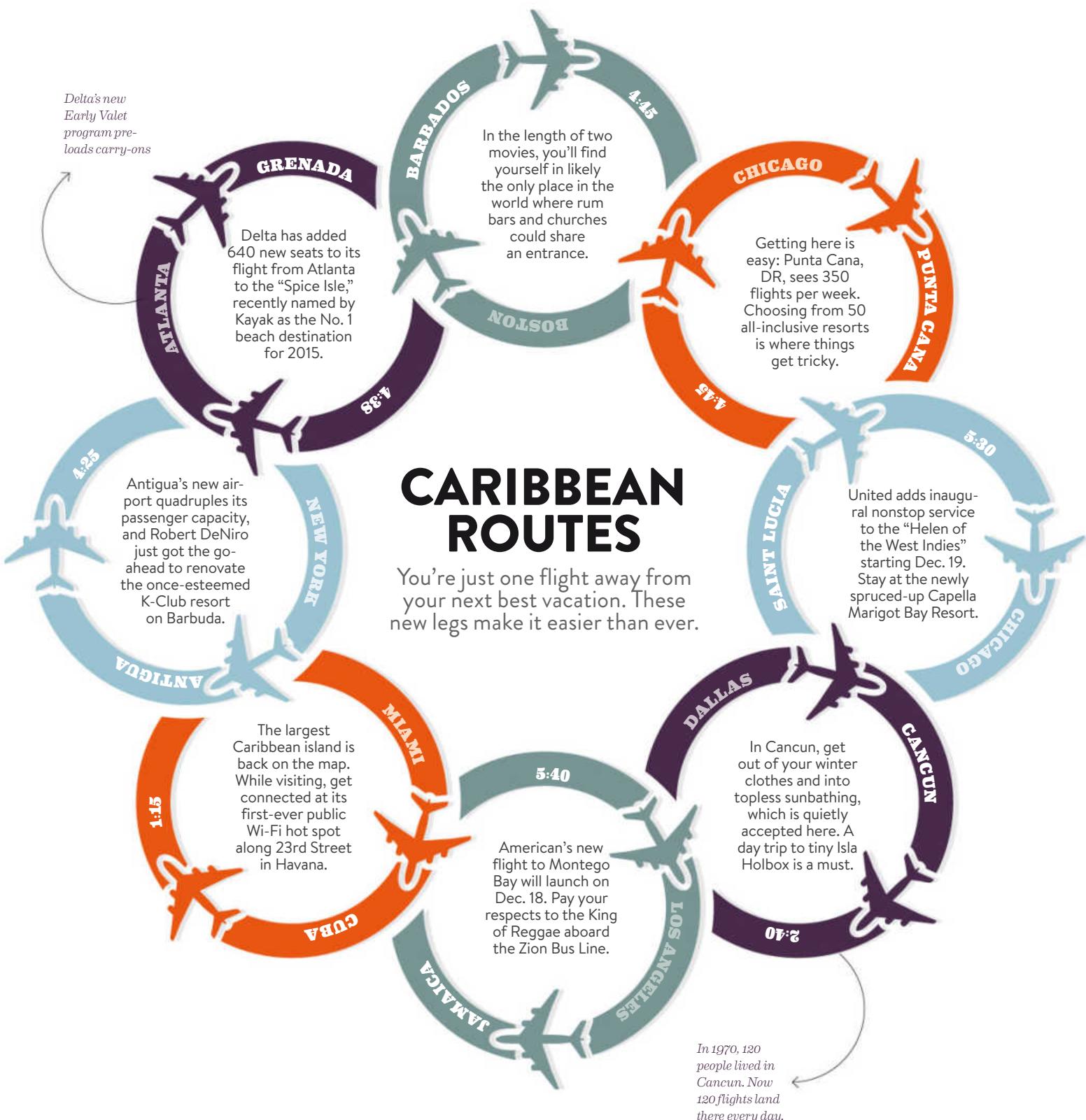
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ANTIGUA	●			●
ARUBA	●			●
BAHAMAS (NASSAU)	●		●	●
BELIZE	●		●	●
BONAIRE		●	●	●
CANCUN	●		●	●
CAYMAN ISLANDS		●	●	●
JAMAICA	●			●
PUERTO RICO	●			●
ST. KITTS		●	●	●
SAINT LUCIA	●			●
TURKS & CAICOS	●			●
ST. THOMAS, USVI	●			●
<b>BOSTON</b>				
ARUBA	●			●
CANCUN		●		●
CAYMAN ISLANDS		●	●	●
JAMAICA		●		●
PUERTO RICO	●		●	●
ST. MAARTEN		●	●	●
TURKS & CAICOS		●		●
ST. THOMAS, USVI	●		●	●
<b>CHICAGO</b>				
BAHAMAS (NASSAU)		●		●
BELIZE		●		●
CAYMAN ISLANDS		●	●	●
JAMAICA	●			●
PUERTO RICO	●			●
SAINT LUCIA		●	●	●
ST. THOMAS, USVI		●	●	●
<b>HOUSTON</b>				
ARUBA		●		●
BAHAMAS (NASSAU)	●			●
BELIZE	●			●
BONAIRE		●		●
CAYMAN ISLANDS	●			●
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC		●	●	●
JAMAICA		●		●
PUERTO RICO	●			●
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	●			●
<b>MINNEAPOLIS</b>				
BAHAMAS (NASSAU)		●		●
CANCUN		●		●
COZUMEL		●		●
CAYMAN ISLANDS		●		●
JAMAICA		●	●	●
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC		●		●
PUERTO RICO		●	●	●
<b>PHILADELPHIA</b>				
ARUBA		●	●	●
CANCUN	●			●
CAYMAN ISLANDS		●	●	●
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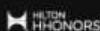
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## 10 BEST MILE



Smathers Beach



The Six Toed Cat

## THE FLOR

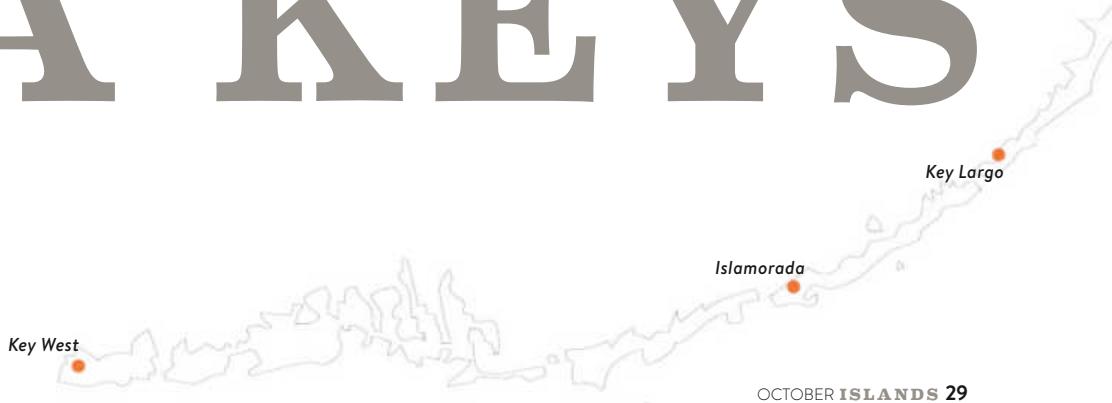
*Winter in Florida brings prime weather for road trips. Buck the trend (and the traffic) by flying to Key West and driving north along Route 1. Preferably with the top down.*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LORI BARBELY

# M A R K E R S I N



# IDA KEYS



# KEY WEST

## MILE MARKER 0

Believe it or not, it wasn't until 2013 that Key West — where drinking is the unofficial sport and the motto is "where the weird go pro" — got its first legal rum distillery. Opened by chef, pro kiteboarder and now distiller Paul Menta, Key West Legal Rum uses Florida sugar cane and other local ingredients, and Key limes are sourced from friends' trees via Facebook. Barrels are salt-water cured by taking them down to the ocean for a dunk. Taste one of the rums for free or sample all six varieties for \$10.75, souvenir shot glass included. Devil's Rum is the all-natural answer to Fireball and the Real Key Lime Rum is perfect for classic Cuba Libres. Find a bottle you like? Take it home; the rum is currently distributed only in Florida. [keywestlegalrum.com](http://keywestlegalrum.com)

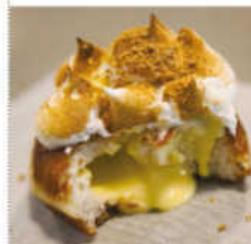
Also worth a look: A fried lobster BLT at the Six Toed Cat restaurant and yoga on the beach at Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park.



## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH ROOSTERS?

They were brought to Key West by Cubans in the '50s, and there are two stories about how they came to roam the streets. When meat and eggs became readily available at markets, raising birds for dinner became obsolete and the birds were released. The other story says the roosters gained their freedom when cockfighting became illegal. The fine for harassing our feathered friends? \$500.

MILE  
0



## ALSO WORTH A LOOK

*Key-lime-pie donuts at Glazed Donuts and turtle races at Turtle Kraals — if your turtle takes top honors, you could win up to \$500.*



## MILE MARKER 0 WHERE TO STAY

For couples, The Marker Resort (\$295 a night, [themarkerkeywest.com](http://themarkerkeywest.com)) is close to the action on Duval Street. Opened in 2014, the Marker features free rum punch in the lobby and a "Conchierge" to help with all your planning needs. Casa Marina (\$259 a night, [casamarinaresort.com](http://casamarinaresort.com)) is the family favorite in Key West — kids love the sand-sculpting classes.

**The Marker Waterfront Resort, Key West**

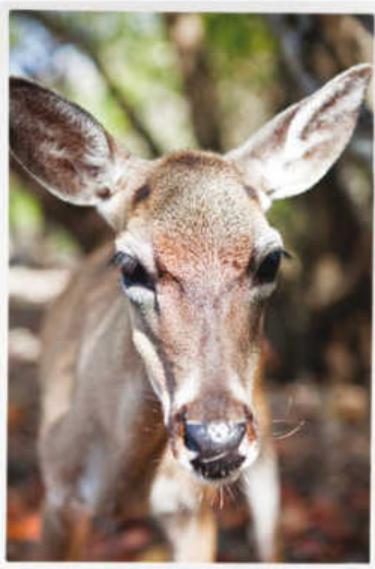


## MILE MARKER 0-106, KEY WEST TO KEY LARGO

Save the hassle (and a few bucks) and tour Key West on two wheels instead of four. Parking can be expensive, so skip the car rental at the airport until it's time to ride north. Bike rentals on the island are as low as \$10 a day, and the isle's small size (less than 8 square miles) and mostly well-organized street grid make it easy to navigate. As an added bonus, cyclists pay lower entry fees than cars into state parks, like Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park. But the bike doesn't have to stop there. The Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail parallels U.S. 1 from Key West to Key Largo, and the paved trail is perfect for riding. It's easier to stop and gawk at the small keys just off the coast than it is in a car, and picnic spots are plentiful. You'll even find a few campgrounds along the way. Get closer to nature while you burn some of those excess Key-lime-pie calories.



MILE  
**3  
0**



## BIG PINE KEY

**MILE MARKER 30.2**

Spend some time in the National Key Deer Refuge and you'll likely get some face time with the endangered Key deer. Standing 2 to 3 feet tall and weighing 50 to 80 pounds, these deer are the smallest in North America and have little fear of humans, which makes them easy to see. Drive down Key Deer Boulevard, stopping at the wildlife trails and the Blue Hole, a freshwater lake (bring bug spray and keep an eye out for gators and bald eagles). Or take Watson Boulevard over to No Name Key, where you'll likely spot these cuties nibbling plants in someone's front yard. It's tempting to feed them, but doing so is a fine-worthy offense. [www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer](http://www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer)

ALSO WORTH  
A LOOK

*Wade in the super-shallow water at Bahia Honda State Park and do a snorkel tour at the Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary.*



**THE LOWER KEYS**

### **MILE MARKER 0-65**

It's the best road-trip game you've never heard of: spot the wacky mailbox.

Manatees, crabs, lighthouses, seahorses, largemouth bass, dolphins — you'll see all these and more as you drive along U.S. 1. Keep an eye out for seasonally dressed manatees; residents often gussy them up in honor of the holidays. Why Keys residents get so quirky with their mailboxes is a mystery, but it makes for an interesting way to pass the time. Want your own 5-foot manatee mailbox? Find it at [manatee-mailboxes.com](http://manatee-mailboxes.com)

**Also worth a look:**  
Stroll the old Seven Mile Bridge and picnic on Pigeon Key, where workers who built the bridge were housed in the early 1900s.



MILE  
**6  
5**



# ISLAMORADA

## MILE MARKER 78.5

Walking up to Robbie's dock in Islamorada, you'll hear shrieks that are part joy and part terror. For \$3 per bucket, you can add your screams to the bunch as you feed tarpon off the dock. More than a hundred tarpon, some as long as 6 feet, hang out in wait for you to drop tasty morsels of baitfish in their mouths. Splashes abound as brave folks, usually young boys or men with something to prove, try to encourage the fish to jump out of the water by dangling their dinner high above the ocean. Beware of the pelicans that will try to thwart your fish-feeding adventure. Pack hand sanitizer and be sure to stop at the Hungry Tarpon where, among menu offerings like cracked conch and shrimp po'boys, the chef will happily cook up your catch of the day. Choose panko-encrusted, grilled, blackened or fried. [robbies.com](http://robbies.com)

MILE  
7  
8



## ISLAMORADA MILE MARKER 84

Nothing good can come from a dare, right? In 1972, Tiki John, bar manager of the Holiday Isle Resort Tiki Bar, proved that wrong when he used up the contents of the storeroom to create the original rumrunner cocktail. Snap the obligatory selfie with the statue commemorating the drink, then grab a seat at the bar overlooking the ocean. The conch-fritter appetizer is plentiful enough for a meal and will save you a few bucks, so get the extra floater of rum in your slushy concoction — just don't plan on driving anytime soon. And that's fine because a nearby cluster of bars, including Kokomo — yes, that Kokomo, supposedly — makes for a quintessential barefoot Keys bar crawl, complete with live music and dancing in the sand. [holidayisle.com/tikibar](http://holidayisle.com/tikibar)

**Also worth a look:** The lobster-and-brie grilled-cheese sandwich at Cheeca Lodge & Spa's Atlantic's Edge restaurant is gooey goodness. Work it off by exploring the old limestone quarry at Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park.



## ALSO WORTH A LOOK

*Anne's Beach  
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and better-  
than-Starbucks  
coffee or tropical  
iced tea (people  
either love it or  
hate it, says the  
cashier) at the  
Midway Cafe &  
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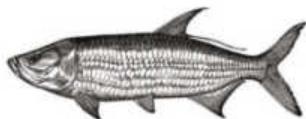
MILE  
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7

## ISLAMORADA MILE MARKER 82-87

Hear us out. We know selfies are a silly trend, but when you see a giant lobster statue like the one at the Rain Barrel Village (mm 86.7), just embrace the absurd.

The giant shark outside Mangrove Mike's Cafe (mm 82.2) begs for a *Sharknado* selfie, and the oversize conch at the

Theater of the Sea (mm 84.5) screams Florida Keys.



## ISLAMORADA WHERE TO STAY

*Cheeca Lodge  
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nights. The  
resort appeals  
to families who  
return each  
year. Repeat  
guests like  
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Bush can't be  
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MILE  
100

## KEY LARGO

### MILE MARKER 100

Never been to Key Largo Chocolates? Let the cashier know, and you'll be offered three samples: white and dark Key-lime chocolate and rum chocolate, all shaped like feet. Little chocolate feet might not sound appealing, but when cashier Sharon explains that they pay homage to the Keys' barefoot lifestyle, suddenly it makes sense. But the chocolates are just part of the story. Walking into the store is a tad overwhelming; perhaps it's the neon pink and (Key-) lime decor, but more likely it's the choices: Ice cream, fudge, Key-lime pie on a stick, Key-lime pistachio

**KEY LARGO MILE MARKER 102.5** Make a pit stop at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. At first glance, this park might not seem like much — because it's all about the water. Located 4 to 6 miles offshore is the only living coral reef in the continental U.S.; in addition to the park's mission of protecting it, there's no shortage of water-based activities. Go for the snorkel tours where you can see the reef up close and personal, including the famous Christ of the Deep statue; stay for a peaceful paddle through the mangroves. Rent a kayak or paddle board and you're given a large, laminated map that will prevent even the most directionally challenged from getting lost on the trails. Don't forget to pack water, sunscreen and a rash guard because there's very little shade. Need to cool off after? Stop in the air-conditioned visitors center to take a look at the saltwater tanks and learn more about the first undersea park in the United States. [pennekamppark.com](http://pennekamppark.com)

**Also worth a look:** Do lunch at the Jules' Undersea Lodge, where you must actually scuba dive to enter, or snack on guava *pastelitos* at Marlin's Restaurant.



MILE  
127



bark, and chocolate alligators all vie for your dollars. Have your dentist on speed dial and sit out front to decide which is your favorite. [keylargochocolates.com](http://keylargochocolates.com)

**Also worth a look:** Take a sunset sail on *African Queen*, a boat made famous in a 1951 movie of the same name.



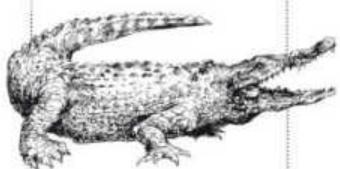
### HOMESTEAD MILE MARKER 127

It's a fruit stand. It's a petting zoo. It's a milkshake store.

The family-owned Robert Is Here is all of the above. Tales of milkshakes lure you in, but while you wait for your super-thick shake to be shook (you'll be grateful for the provided spoon),

there's plenty to see. Browse the fruit stand and load up on pricey locally grown tropical fruit, from tamarinds to mameys to sapodillas (the staff will even cut your fruit on the spot if you just can't wait).

Also, snag salsa, hot sauce and marmalade, and use the tiny tasting spoons to try more than a dozen varieties of honey. At the free petting zoo out back, watch goats do battle for dominance, get eyeballed by emus and see tortoises make baby tortoises. Don't worry; you'll hear them announce your number over the PA when your Key-lime shake is ready. Closed in September and October to prep for the winter farm season. [robertishere.com](http://robertishere.com)



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## Hawai‘i's *Top* Farmers Markets



Forget the grocery store. In the Hawaiian Islands, farmers markets boast a lot of variety — from fruits to fish — in gorgeous outdoor spaces. Arrive hungry, and check out nearby attractions while you're at it.



Photos this row: Hawai‘i Tourism Authority

## Hawai‘i Island

It's a tradition that began more than 25 years ago. Every Wednesday and Saturday, from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., 200-plus vendors gather at the Hilo Farmers Market. Located in downtown Hilo on Hawai‘i Island, overlooking a stunning bay, the market boasts everything from ready-to-eat plate lunches to produce and crafts. Try the myriad seasonal tropical fruits, such as mangosteen, rambutan, cherimoya, dragon fruit, soursop, breadfruit and durian. Peruse the flower vendors patiently nurturing everything from orchid flowers to anthurium plants. For gifts, check out the carefully crafted koa wood bowls, shell lei and lauhala weavings, or opt for jarred take-homes like local honey, macadamia nut butter and jams made of local fruits like poha berry and passion fruit. What's more, you'll be treated to live island-style music while you shop. [hilofarmersmarket.com](http://hilofarmersmarket.com)



**Insider Tip** The market is a regular haunt for locals, so take the time to mingle — and don't forget to try the fresh-pressed coconut water.

**Nearby Attraction:** About 45 minutes from downtown Hilo is Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park, home to Kīlauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes. Dress appropriately, because its 333,086 acres contain seven ecological zones with features like lava tubes and native rainforests. [nps.gov/havo](http://nps.gov/havo)

## O‘ahu

Held every Saturday, from 7:30 to 11 a.m. on Kapi‘olani Community College's campus, the bustling KCC Farmers Market brings together dozens of vendors to offer a variety of island-produced goods. Sure, you will find what you'd expect in Hawai‘i — from papayas to pineapples — but stray from the norm and try things like sea asparagus, a distant relative of beets and spinach raised hydroponically on O‘ahu's North Shore, or taste poi, a staple of the traditional Hawaiian diet made from pounded taro root. For those with big appetites, food booths feature everything from local beef burgers to fish sausages made with opah, or Hawaiian moonfish. Take-home

goods include Hawai‘i Island-grown coffee, Hawaiian sea salt for cooking, and chocolate made from locally sourced cacao. [hfbf.org/markets/markets/kcc](http://hfbf.org/markets/markets/kcc)

**Nearby Attraction:** Across the street from KCC is the Diamond Head State Monument, home to a volcanic crater formed some 300,000 years ago. A 0.8-mile hike to the summit climbs 560 feet — imagine stairs, and lots of them — and offers stunning views of Waikiki's coastline. [dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/oahu/diamond-head-state-monument](http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/oahu/diamond-head-state-monument)

**Insider Tip** Seek out the food stand of the Pig and the Lady — a popular restaurant located in O‘ahu's Chinatown. Chef Andrew and his mom, affectionately known as "Mama Le," create a new menu each Saturday and target the theme of "Asian street food" with an emphasis on Vietnamese cuisine.



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## Kaua'i

Located in Po'ipū at the Shops at Kukui'ula, the Kaua'i Culinary Market features products that are grown or made only on Kaua'i. Held every Wednesday night from 3:30 to 6 p.m., the farm-to-table experience offers fresh seasonal produce, vibrant tropical flowers, freshly baked breads and pies, and a delicious sampling of artisanal foods. Pick up a culinary trick or two at 5 p.m., when south shore chefs offer demonstrations using local ingredients — and offer samplings and recipes to take home. [theshopsatkukuiula.com/event/kaua-i-culinary-market](http://theshopsatkukuiula.com/event/kaua-i-culinary-market)

**Insider Tip** The Kaua'i Culinary Market is intentionally timed to serve as a pau hana (finished work) event. So act like a local and enjoy the live Hawaiian music, visit the beer garden and take advantage of the friendly atmosphere.

**Nearby Attraction:** Walk to crescent-shaped Po'ipū Beach and be on the lookout for honu (Hawaiian green sea turtles) and endangered Hawaiian monk seals often seen bathing on the shoreline. From December through May, keep your eyes peeled for humpback whales. Every year, more than 10,000 of these giant mammals travel from Alaska to Hawai'i to mate, give birth and nurse their young.



Photo: Hawai'i Tourism Authority



Photo: Hawai'i Tourism Authority

## Maui

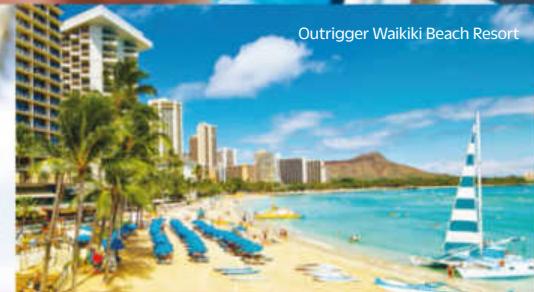
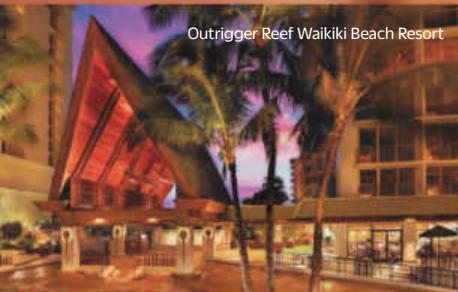
Maui's Upcountry Farmers Market features more than 40 local farmers who offer such treats as coconuts, Maui-grown coffee and macadamia nuts. Empty stomachs are welcome here; freshly prepared food such as sushi, Thai and Indian cuisine are on hand. The market is open every Saturday from 7 to 11 a.m., and located at Kula Malu Town Center in Pukalani. [upcountryfarmersmarket.com](http://upcountryfarmersmarket.com)

**Nearby Attraction:** To see — and partake in — upcountry agriculture, go to the 42-acre Surfing Goat Dairy, where you can feed and hand-milk island goats. [surfinggoatdairy.com](http://surfinggoatdairy.com) If that isn't enough, travel to the 13.5-acre Ali'i Kula Lavender Farm and wander among 55,000 lavender plants used for oils, teas, soaps and more. [aliikulalavender.com](http://aliikulalavender.com)

**Insider Tip** If fresh fish is what you crave, you're in luck; local fishers offer their catch here.



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A WORLDWIDE  
TOUR OF THE  
HUMBLE DONUT

# LIFE HERE

## ***Sassari, Sardinia***

The Old Quarter of Sardinia's second largest city is a throwback to a bygone era; its narrow medieval streets hum with small businesses manned by local shopkeepers. Need a shave and a haircut? This happy barber lives to do just that. Piazza Italia is Sassari's largest square, lined with 19th-century neoclassical buildings — it's the place to be on a Sunday morning. About an hour from the piazza is the Museo Nazionale Sanna, with its impressive collection of Sardinian folk art. A half-hour by bus gets you to the coastal town of Alghero, known for its long white-sand beaches.

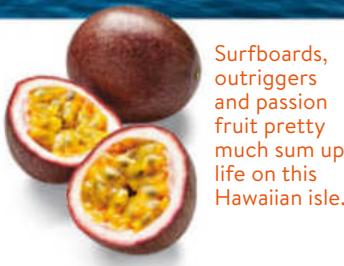


# OAHU STRUMS

Jack Johnson is an international singing sensation who travels the globe, but he's most content at home in Hawaii.



HONOLULU



Surfboards, outriggers and passion fruit pretty much sum up life on this Hawaiian isle.

**Oahu is a pretty nice place to grow up.** As a teenager, I took a lot of Hawaiian outrigger trips with my father. There's not a lot of space on those boats, so you barely bring anything. Those are my fondest memories — being out in nature on these voyages.

**I try to give my kids those same experiences.** My wife, Kim, and I started the Kokua Hawaii Foundation ([kokuahawaii.org](http://kokuahawaii.org)) to give kids hands-on activities that engage them with their environment.

**From the age you learn to ride a bike, a lot of kids here learn to ride a surfboard.** Growing up, I wanted to do it as

much as possible. And sailing and snorkeling, just anything in the water. I'm a fish. I spend as much time in the ocean as possible.

**Diamond Head (Le'ahi) is one of the most recognizable landmarks on the island.** It makes for a great hike to see inside the crater. It's also one of the closest hikes to Honolulu.

**Malasadas, those are good.** Plate lunches, those are good too. Breadfruit, or 'ulu, is used a lot; it's like the new kale. A friend of ours makes a good breadfruit hummus.

**Oahu has a great music scene.** Paula Fuga, John Cruz, Kawika Kahapo and Mike Love are musicians

friends of mine who write amazing songs and are great to see live at The Shell, a historic outdoor venue.

**Ninety percent of our food is shipped here.** It's one of the biggest problems we have. A lot of the farmlands are getting rezoned, and once something's built on it, we lose that farmland forever.

**Shop at farmers markets to support Hawaiian farmers while you're here.** On Saturdays, Ward Market sells tons of local and organic produce, like lychee and green papaya. Experience real Hawaii — the sights, the sounds and smells native to the land. Part of that is tasting the food grown here, not what's shipped in. — *as told to Sarah Sekula*

## JACK JOHNSON AGE 40

### OCCUPATION

Platinum-selling singer-songwriter, environmental activist, record producer

### FORMER LIFE

Pro surfer, filmmaker

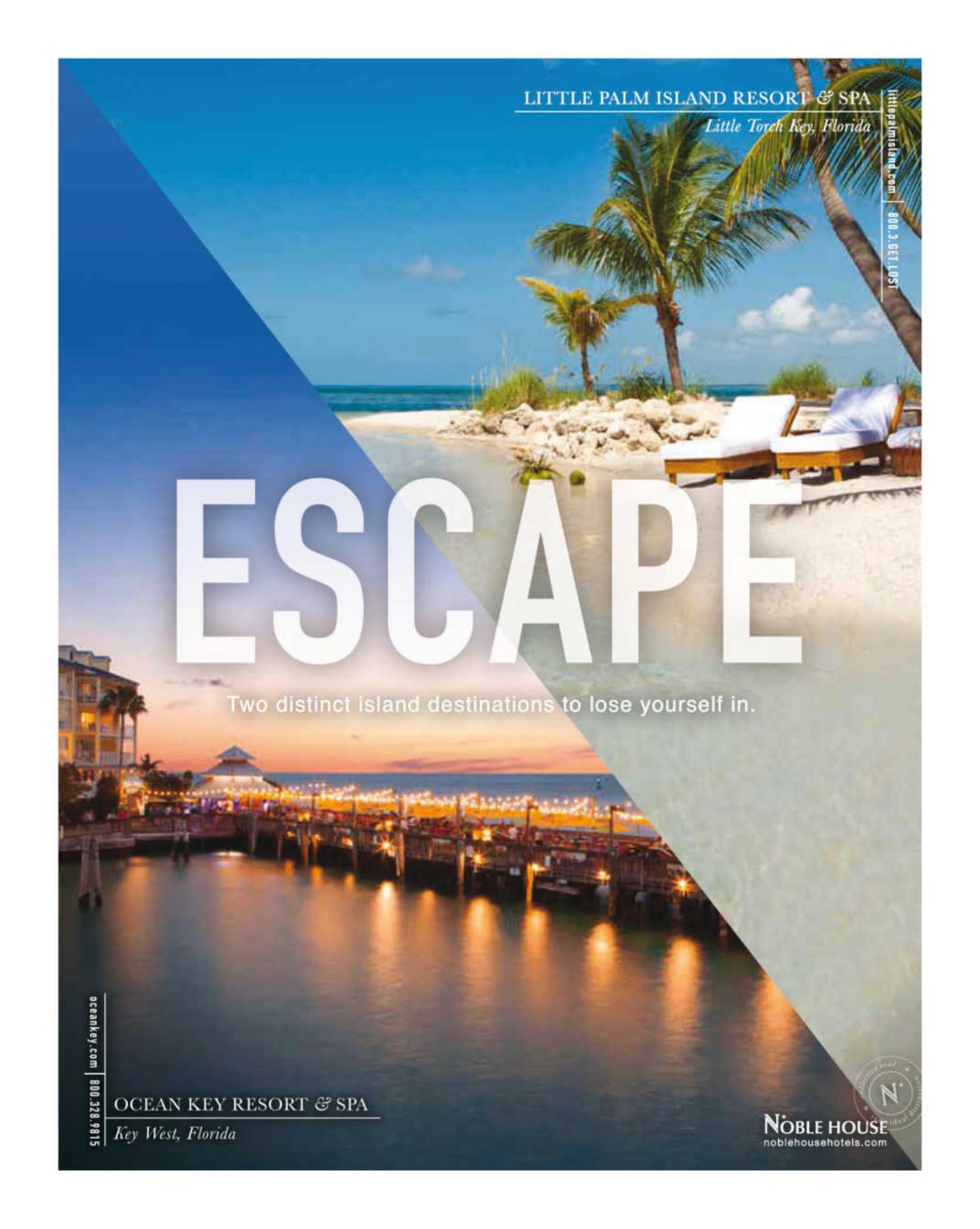
## WHAT'S NEW ON OAHU

### RECYCLERS REJOICE

Starting July 1, all businesses can no longer provide plastic checkout bags or non-recyclable paper bags to their customers. Businesses can provide reusable bags with or without a charge.

## NEW VIEWS

Whale-spotting is the ultimate Hawaiian pastime. And Makapu'u Lighthouse Trail is the perfect vantage point. Bike Hawaii's new guided eco-hike on the eastern shoreline takes you on a leisurely trek that ends nearly 650 feet above the Pacific. (Binoculars included.)



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Downtown Thorshavn  
in the Faroe Islands



BY EDWARD READICKER-HENDERSON

## A TAD SHEEPISH

**WHERE: THE END OF THE UNIVERSE**  
**THE FIND: DRIED MUTTON**

"The trash can is over there." It's an odd thing for a fine-dining chef to say, but the dish Leif Sørensen serves me in his restaurant is way off-menu. On a small wooden platter are four samples of the staples of the Faroe Islands. I don't care for the little ball of whale blubber, but I'm intrigued by what looks most like a slice of *pata negra* (the Spanish ham from black sheep of the Pyrenees) and smells like a ripening chamber for Gorgonzola cheese. "That's it, that's

skerpikjöt," says Leif, arguably the best chef in the Atlantic Ocean. "Really, feel free to use the trash can."

I look up for a moment and stare at my own reflection in the window, which would've provided me with a splendid view of Thorshavn were it not for a dense fog. Thorshavn is the proud capital of this 18-island archipelago inhabited by 50,000 people halfway between Norway and Iceland. The window is now a milky white mirror, sending me from the end of the world, 300 miles from the nearest mainland, to Douglas Adams' restaurant at the end of the universe. The big bang the

skerpikjöt (pronounced *scar-pe-kyod*) delivers to my nose brings me back to reality. This is not your everyday delicacy.

"Very few people immediately like the taste of it," Leif told me earlier, at his restaurant, Koks. It's a unique local product consisting of wind-dried mutton. The meat not only dries but also decays, producing its pungent smell. Leif uses it as a kind of seasoning. He carefully fries the skerpikjöt until it's crisp, then crumbles it into a powder that he sprinkles over his lamb fillets. "It gives a hint of what it tastes like, and maybe in a few years some of our foreign regulars will appreciate the real thing."

### TRAVEL TIP

Visit the Faroe Islands in June to see the kickoff of *grindadráp*, traditional whale hunts.

SAY OUR EDITORS

I've come to see Leif to talk about traditional Faroese food. The dish he serves me now comes as a surprise between the haute cuisine courses he prepared so far. This is the real stuff. Leaving the skerpikjöt for last, I taste the blubber, which reminds me why I don't eat rancid butter. I am surprised by the semi-dried cod, better than the stockfish in other Nordic countries. Then I pick up the skerpikjöt.

Skerpikjöt really is a unique Faroese product. The mutton dries in the *hjallur*, the food house found outside each home, alongside barrels filled with sea birds, fish, whale blubber and whale meat, processed and conserved for the long winter months. The only domestic animals to thrive in these hills are sheep; this vulnerable environment supports 70,000. No more.

The sheep are killed at the end of summer. In the course of winter, the wind produces skerpikjöt. Faroese connoisseurs will explain that the best skerpikjöt is the result of perfectly balanced stages. It takes at least five months for the forces of nature to produce a decent skerpikjöt, to be enjoyed thinly sliced on rye bread and washed away with the local beer the Faroese love so much.

The Faroese, sailors and fishermen, born and raised in a tradition of honest food, are generally not fans of Leif's culinary accolades. They don't care about the Michelin stars he's earned, nor that he was an initiator of the Nordic cuisine movement — young Scandinavian chefs who broke tradition to develop a new cooking style based on Nordic ingredients. "He runs a restaurant for wealthy foreigners. We don't go there," one local told me.

But Leif is as Faroese as these fishermen. Despite his success in the Danish capital and the fact that he married a Danish girl, his mainland roots didn't catch. He moved back to Thorshavn to run Koks, the restaurant in the islands' only four-star hotel, Forøyar.

Aiming to give Nordic cuisine a Faroese twist, Leif set out to look for typical Faroese ingredients. Fish and other seafood are obvious. But apart from grass and the occasional potato patch, little grows here. "We do have wild herbs and edible flowers," says Leif. And lamb, of course, but that was a problem.

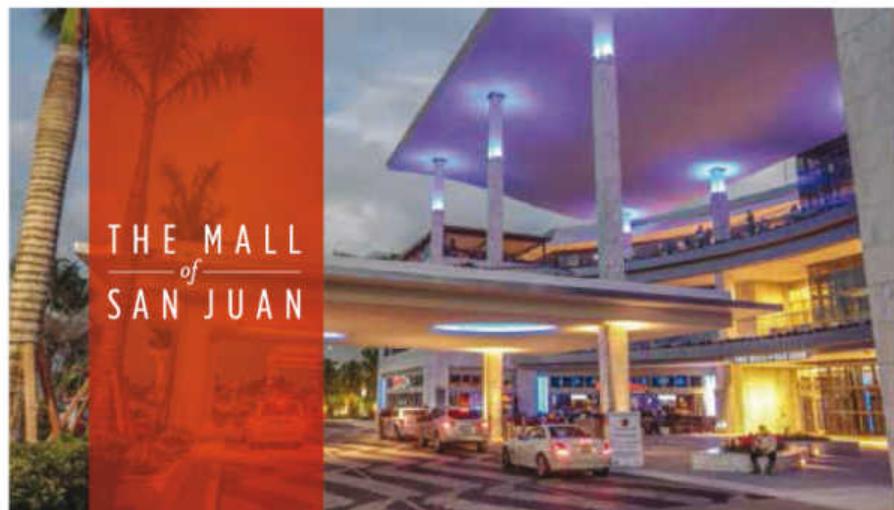
"In a restaurant, you can only serve meat that's professionally slaughtered, but there was no butcher here," says Leif. "Everybody slaughters at home, so the only

meat in shops is imported." It wasn't until Leif found a local businessman willing to invest in a butcher shop that Koks and other eateries could serve fresh lamb.

I wonder if the skerpikjöt came from the butcher as I pick up a small piece off my plate. I brace myself and place it on my tongue, ready to run for the bin. But there has to be something wrong with my taste buds. Or not. I like pata negra, and I love

Gorgonzola. Here, the strong taste of an overripe blue cheese blends perfectly with the salty bitterness of the meat. This is much, much better than blubber.

"This was gorgeous," I say as Leif delivers a fresh skerpikjöt-coated lamb fillet. "You should export this. It might become as famous as Parma ham." Leif considers this for a second, but he decides against it: "We have barely enough sheep for ourselves."



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Shuri Castle was  
destroyed during  
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## THE WAR BOOK

ON THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II, JON WHITTLE RETRACES HIS GRANDFATHER'S STEPS IN OKINAWA TO FIND OUT IF A PLACE CAN TELL THE STORIES THAT THE SOLDIER NEVER DID.

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY JON WHITTLE



This yellowed stack of letters told stories of sniper fire and the discomfort of foxholes, but they were mostly love letters to my grandmother. He wrote one for almost every day he was away during the 1945 invasion.

**D**rumbeats echo down the Kukosai Dori as the Eisa parade makes its way through the crowded streets of Naha, Okinawa. Hundreds of colorfully clad dancers leap and prance to the rhythm as their split-toed shoes cushion every elaborate maneuver against the asphalt. It's a blistering hot afternoon, and shade along the exposed street is sparse. Families duck under the awnings of tourist shops where deadly habu snakes, forever frozen in bottles of Awamori, stare lifelessly at the nearby children. The pounding of the barrel drums is loud enough to wake the dead. Fair enough — this is not a celebration for the living. During the Obon Festival, it's said that spirits of Japanese ancestors return to visit with surviving family. I've come to Okinawa to find a ghost of my own.

Eight years ago, in a tiny room in South Florida, my grandfather John "Jack" Crossman took his last breath — and with it every story he never told us, including the ones about the invasion of Okinawa. In the fall of 1942, Jack reported for duty as a Navy yeoman and soon found himself moving west from small-town Arkansas to Leyte in the Philippines. On April 1, 1945, when Allied

forces began the assault on Okinawa, my grandfather was there, leaning against the rails of a Navy ship as the artillery roared. His unit was attached to the 96th Infantry regiment, tasked with caring for civilians displaced or wounded in the conflict. He would say only that Okinawa was a beautiful place and that the civilians were kind. Past that? Wet eyes and silence. Before he died, he asked me to take his war book: a patchwork scrapbook kept by my grandmother. It's full of newspaper clippings, photographs, drawings and letters. A lot of letters. One sent home for almost every day he was away.

It was some time before I found the strength to open the book. Here, at last, were the missing pieces to a life unremembered. A black-and-white photo of a strapping young man standing on a blasted hill. Sketches of vague landmarks and architectural details. Striking photos of a village with a large group of native people sitting together, another of a stage with what appears to be the performance of a play. Scrawled on the back of the photos are the town names. Kushi. Gushichan.

The war book was a collection of riddles, and every page led to more unanswered questions. Could I get to know a ghost better than I knew him in life? Could a place tell me the stories my grandfather never did?

*0830, April 1, 1945. First waves of troops went ashore. Our ships were everywhere and the sky was filled with our airplanes and our fleet was blasting the hell out of the beaches.*

In the early morning hours of Easter Sunday, 1945, the Allied command arrived in Okinawa with a very real threat to the Japanese army: 1,300 ships carrying 183,000 U.S. troops. Artillery rounds darkened the sky as every ship fired shell after shell into the coral and limestone hills. The battle, later called "The Typhoon of Steel," eventually took roughly one-third of the civilian lives on Okinawa, the largest of Japan's Ryukyu chain of islands, nearly wiping out its cultural legacy and literally reconfiguring the landscape.

Seventy years later, the beachhead where my grandfather first came ashore is quiet. It's a beach day like any other, with kids dodging waves while parents casually look on. I glance around while my translator and guide, Saori, stands silently with me. She is a small, wiry brunette with an athlete's poise and an easy smile. "So this is the spot," I say quietly. "There's nothing here at all."



From above:  
the Eisa parade,  
Motobu pen-  
insula, former  
ammunition  
site, pork with  
soba noodles.

**THE WAR BOOK WAS A COLLECTION OF RIDDLES, AND**  
EVERY PAGE LED TO MORE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS. COULD  
I GET TO KNOW A GHOST BETTER THAN I KNEW HIM IN LIFE?





We climb a rickety staircase to walk across eroded sea stacks, the Hija River flowing inward from the beachhead. From here, the delineation of the reef is clear, and the long, unspoiled beach winding its way toward the vanishing point seems like it's posing for a postcard. In the distance, three stone structures sit along the water's edge. "What are those?" I ask. "Tombs of Okinawan families," Saori says. A memory stirs.

The tombs' rounded roofs and sleek curving lines fascinated my grandfather. In one of his letters, he mentions that a tomb could just as easily hold a starving, terrified family as it could a .50 caliber machine gun waiting for a passing American patrol. The war book contains an ink sketch of a tomb. I pull it from my bag and hold it up against the ones in the distance. The background is different, the shapes similar. There are literally thousands of these tombs scattered across Okinawa.

This is going to be harder than I thought.

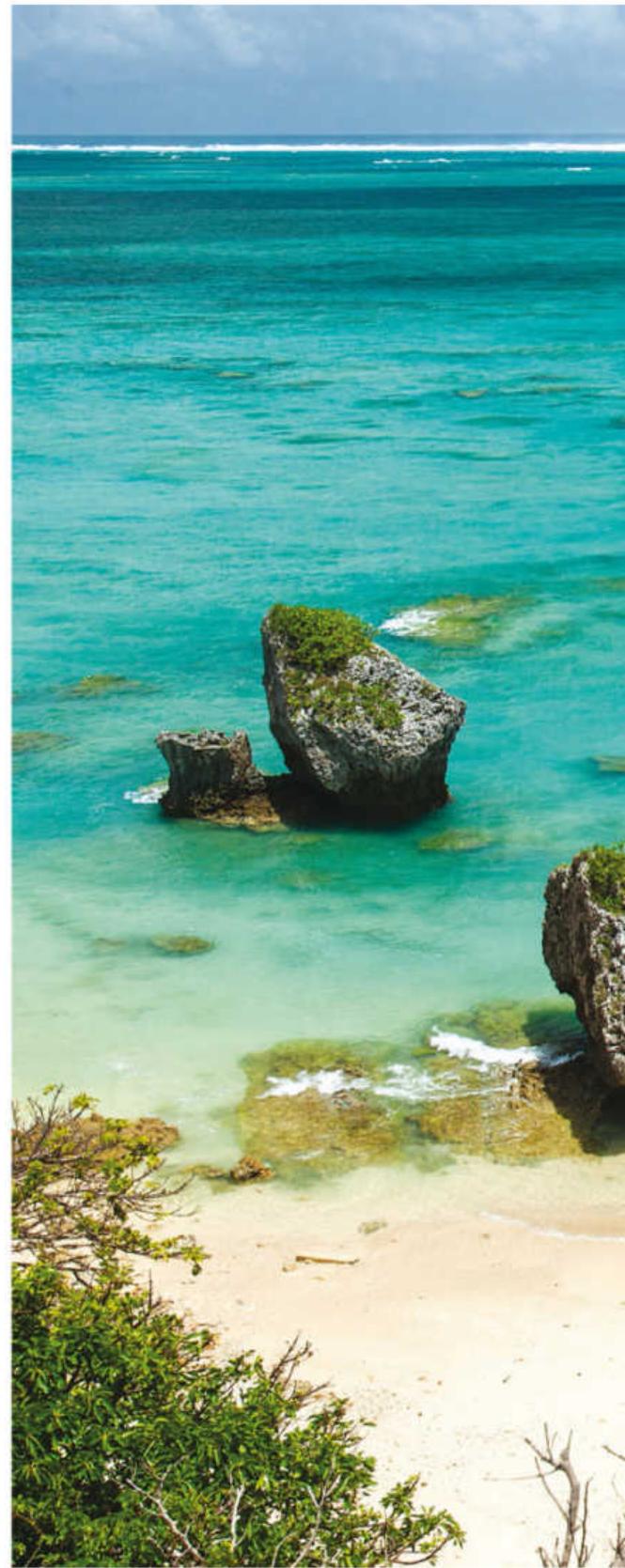
Through the destruction, the death, the rubble, my grandfather saw an amazing place. Rolling green hills end against seaside cliffs. Vast agricultural fields claim the lowlands. Quaint homes populate the rural areas. Closer to town, hillsides covered in Turtleback tombs give way to cityscapes, dotted with old buildings and new vending machines as varied in color as they are in goods.

After ascending Hacksaw Ridge, I refer to a letter home. "This was the ridge that was so hard to take, and it's now a ruin. I saw small yellow flowers, the only thing pretty, and I'm sending them to you. Beside these flowers,



My grandfather was tasked with the care of civilians and those displaced by the war, many of whom took shelter in traditional Okinawan Turtleback tombs. Their unique, domed shape can be found only in Okinawa and parts of China, a testament to the Chinese influence on the ancient Ryukyu Kingdom. The drawings that he made of the landscape became clues for me to follow as I retraced his steps.

Gushichan's southern coastline has a rugged beauty unlike any other region of Okinawa. Above: Haru Asato.





#### WHEN TO GO

Okinawa has something to offer year-round, but it's best to visit during either spring or fall. Summers in Okinawa can be hot and humid, with temperatures rising into the mid-90s, and the highest risk for typhoons occurs in July and August. Japan is known for its cherry blossoms and receives millions of visitors annually for the traditional sight of the pink blooms against classic Japanese architecture. Time your trip for late January to February; the colorful trees tend to show off their beauty in Okinawa as much as two months before the mainland to the north.

沖縄県文化財指定  
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登窯  
南窯

南窯

屋焼と喫茶  
ふえーぬかま  
南窯

**"I SAW SOME SMALL YELLOW FLOWERS, THE ONLY THING PRETTY, AND I'M SENDING THEM TO YOU. BESIDE THESE FLOWERS, BULLETS WHISTLED, SHELLS BURST, AND MANY OF OUR OWN MEN DIED."**



Both civilians and prisoners gave my grandfather drawings that he cared for during the invasion. It was my hope to find the artists who crafted them, but 70 years is a long time, and the trail went cold. Additionally, the landscape of the island was literally reconfigured by artillery bombardment, and recognizing any landmarks was nearly impossible. My best guess is that the above is the infamous Hacksaw Ridge.

The winding streets of the Tsuboya pottery district show off fine examples of Okinawan earthenware. Above: The future of Kushi.

bullets whistled, shells burst, and many of our own men died. I find a patch of yellow flowers. I pick several for myself." Still, there's an absence of what I came here to find. Tomorrow, I'll head down to Gushichan, where my grandfather worked in a camp with displaced citizens after the battle was over. Maybe his ghost is there.

Standing inside the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, the true devastation washes over me. The memorial commemorates everyone who died in the conflict, not just Americans. Roughly a quarter million engraved names. Absent among the massive toll of war I've observed thus far is Jack Crossman. I feel lost.

Back at the Hyakunagaran Hotel, there's a knock on my door. "Manager here," Saori says breathlessly. "He called a friend who knows an old woman who was in Gushichan during the war. We meet her in the morning."

Saori navigates the winding streets of Gushichan, arriving at a humble home. The entrance is flanked by shisa, a pair of lion dogs that ward off evil spirits and protect the good spirits within.

Under the awning, poised, graceful and much less nervous than I am, sits Haru Asato. She is 93 years old, but if it weren't for the spots dotting her face and a noticeable tremble to her jaw when speaking, I couldn't have guessed. She rises to meet me. I bow awkwardly.

Haru was 23 when the war arrived. As part of the kyosei kyoshi, which dictated that civilians and military would live and die together, she was tasked with helping the Japanese soldiers find fortified positions and hiding places. In anticipation of the American attack, Haru took refuge in a cave six months before the first shells rained down on the northern coastline. "We were so scared of the Americans because we were told they would torture and kill us," Haru recalls.

"But we grew even more frightened of the Japanese soldiers, especially when they started saying we all should commit suicide." Then one day the Japanese soldiers were gone, and the Americans came into the cave where she'd been hiding.

"I played dead," Haru says, her eyes wide. "Two soldiers sat down beside me. One of them took my pulse and must've felt that I was alive. One of them opened my eye with his fingers." She smiles, her mouth trembling. "I remember how handsome they were." The tension in the room dissipates with the laughter. "The Americans were very kind to me, even in the camp in Kushi."

Kushi. The town name scrawled on the back of the



photos taken during my grandfather's time in the camp. I pull the war book from my backpack and lay it on the table, hands trembling. Haru's eyes light up. She points toward the page. "I could be in this photo! You can tell this was from the camp in Kushi because of the hats the children are wearing. The soldiers gave them these hats." I show her another photo, the one of people on a stage. She nods, speaking faster now. "After the war was over, the people in camp were sad, so we put on plays for each other to bring happiness."

All the questions I had were quickly being answered. The people. The places. She looks through the book. "Your grandfather had a beautiful heart," Haru says.

For a moment, Jack Crossman is alive in the eyes of a stranger, brought back to life by words and photos. Until then, I never realized how important stories were. After we leave, the thread of a tale is all that ties us together.

**CURRY BREAD, JAPAN** This savory spin on donuts is so popular in Japanese culture, a character in the *Anpanman* series was named Kare Pan Man, or Curry Bread Man. Think of the breads as fried Hot Pockets. Bakers simply wrap curry in dough, sprinkle breadcrumbs on top, and fry away.



**MALASADAS, HAWAII** Plantation workers from the Madeira islands brought these sugar-covered fried dough balls to Hawaii in the 1800s. Today the donuts are a delicacy, and each island has its favorite shop — on Oahu, it's Leonard's; on Maui, it's the T. Komoda Store and Bakery. Most places sell the goodies by the dozen.



## DONUT WORLD TOUR

The duality of the donut intrigues. Some are sweet, soft and cakey. Others are hard, crunchy and meaty. An edible yin and yang. Here's a rundown of our favorite forms of fried dough from around the world.

BY MATT VILLANO



### LOUKOUADES, GREECE

What stands out about this Greek treat is its heft. Unlike other donut specimens, which are dense, the bonbon-size loukoumades are light and airy — so airy, in fact, that they usually deflate when you take a bite. Most Greek islanders serve the pastries with cinnamon or honey.

### BONELOS AGA, GUAM

Bananas are plentiful on Guam, and these Chamorro donuts are basically banana fritters. Most bakers fry the goodies until they're golden brown, then serve them on a platter or in a small bag. Some come with sugar or honey on top; others are filled with jam or yams.



**ENSAIMADA, SPAIN** Reduced pork lard gives these round pastries their distinct flavor — a hint of bacon mixed with cakey dough and powdered sugar. Thought to have originated on Mallorca, they've become an art form on the Balearic Isles.



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LeSPORT

# MEET MAUI

BEST FOR: NATURE LOVERS CRAVING CRATERS, CAVES AND COCONUTS



**CRAIG HILL**  
Concierge at Honua Kai Resort & Spa  
Years on island: 30

**MY 3 CENTS**

1. Upcountry is more of a farming land; it also has a cooler climate. People are surprised by that. They tend to think Maui's all beaches.

2. There's a misconception that we have a lot of tsunamis. I've lived here 30 years, and I've been through only three, all very minor.

3. I have AC in the house, but I prefer to have the cool breeze come through the front door to the back. Often the breeze is so nice I don't need AC at all.



**T**he other day while paddling, I had to make a quick detour toward the shore to avoid a competition pod of male humpbacks vying for the chance to escort a nearby female. It's like my own personal episode on the Discovery Channel, every single day. Maui's much more than hippies and surfers.

For some, it can be a challenge to fit in here at first, but if you keep a positive attitude and respect the people, the land and the culture, then the aloha truly comes back to you. If you try to impose your own way of thinking on those here or fail to respect the Hawaiian ways, then the island can be a pretty tough place to get comfortable.

**DAILY SNAPSHOT** We pretty much have every kind of climate here except the arctic tundra. When I'm missing cold weather and craving mountains (I'm from Denver), I'll head upcountry where the temp drops significantly. At the Makawao Forest Reserve, I'm surrounded by massive eucalyptus trees and glimpses of the ocean. The next thing I know, I'm on my mountain bike charging up the trail thinking to myself, *Am I still on Maui?* For adventure in another gear, we head to Hana, the lush and green east side of the island, to run through bamboo forests, swim in underwater caves, jump off 60-foot waterfalls and trek through lava tubes. We call this Hana on crack. At the end of the

# WISE CRACK

BY ANN VANDERHOOF

TO BUY  
OR TO  
TRY

Honua Kai, a swanky resort on North Kaanapali Beach, has one-, two- and three-bedroom condos from \$1 million to \$3.9 million. Its new Makai Collection has eight oceanfront homes. Vacation rentals start at \$248 a night. [ownhonuakai.com](http://ownhonuakai.com)



day, we all head out to our favorite local spot in town, Cool Cats, for live music, burgers and beers.

**BUYER BEWARE** Things move slowly here, but no complaints about that. It's an island. Some people planning to move to Maui try to line up a job and a place to stay before they come out; it doesn't really work like that. These days, I'm busy playing ukulele and singing songs as part of my acoustic duo, Barefoot Minded. When I arrived here, however, I was in a one-bedroom apartment with five other people. I slept on the kitchen floor. But it all worked out. Got a job waiting tables within a week, but I was still sleeping on the kitchen floor. — *Oren Masserman, as told to Sarah Sekula*

People he doesn't even know regularly shout, "Mornin', Doc," to Gary Adams as he jogs Grenada's twisty roads. He's the island's only chiropractor, but what makes him a local hit is rock 'n' roll. When he and partner Jeanie Parr arrived by boat eight years ago from their previous home port on Lake Ontario, he had a Fender Stratocaster and amp stowed aboard his classic 38-foot sport-fisherman, along with his portable chiropractic adjusting table. "My patients joke that my plan is to get them up and dancing so they put their backs out and have to come see me."

**Q:** "Mustang Sally" and "Under the Boardwalk" draw crowds in the land of calypso and soca?

**A:** You'd be surprised how many Grenadians know all the old rock 'n' roll songs. They love old country-and-western too. I don't know where that comes from, but my audiences are always a mix of locals and foreigners.

**Q:** What are your gigs like here?

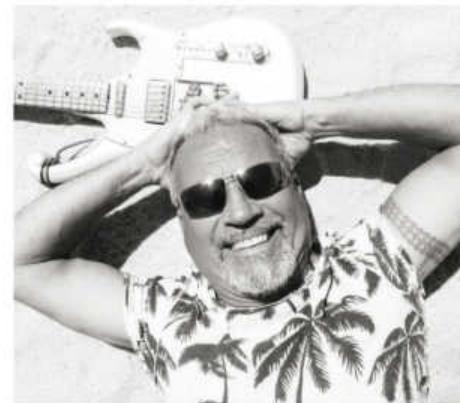
**A:** Up north, they started at 9 p.m. and went until at least 1 in the morning. Here, they're 7 to 9, or on Sunday afternoons on the beach, with people dancing in the sand. People are in a different headspace — more relaxed, easygoing. At one of my first gigs, at a waterfront restaurant, a couple was jiving, throwing each other around. They lost their balance and wiped out a couple of tables where people were eating. It was total bedlam, and I thought, "Yeah, this is where I belong."

**Q:** Any odd venues?

**A:** The most unusual was a tug-boat. The audience was rafted off in inflatable dinghies, then stood up and danced in their boats. And then they dove in to cool off — it was scorching hot, not to mention windy and wavy. Playing the guitar was quite a challenge.

**Q:** Seeing patients must be challenging too.

**A:** Having appointments is almost impossible; life really is on island time. I try to let people



know when it would be good for them to pop in. A patient once called and said, "You asked me to come around 10, but I need to come earlier." I said, "That's fine." So he showed up at 11:30.

**Q:** I hear you had one of the first Harley-Davidsons on island.

**A:** I had it shipped to Grenada in a container. It's a Softail Custom, sort of a chopper-style bike. When the customs officers opened the crate, they'd never seen one before. They were convinced it was a Honda, and I couldn't change their minds.

**Q:** A Harley-riding, rock 'n' roller who helps people in pain. Was this all part of the plan?

**A:** When we went to the Caribbean, our goal was to find a vacation home, no idea where. I never thought I'd see patients. But people knocked on our hull and asked if I could help. In the early years, I used to make boat calls; now I have a little office.

**Q:** So why Grenada?

**A:** We stopped at 50 islands, and at every one, we asked ourselves, "Could we live here?" On some, I could see myself in a hammock tied to palm trees on a beautiful beach. And then I'd realize that after three weeks I'd go stir crazy. Others felt too large. Grenada was just right. We built a house in Phare Bleu Bay at the south end, up the hill from the marina where my office is. I can walk to work, and we can always smell some spice or flower in the air.



LESLIE PARROTT

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CHECKING IN  
AT EXCLUSIVE  
JUMBY BAY

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WHAT'S NEW  
FOR CRUISING  
IN 2016

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YOUR IDEAL  
RESORT FROM  
BED TO BATH

# STAY HERE

## **Riviera Maya**

Before tourists began chugging tequila to the blaring of a coach's whistle, before "twerking" was a word, there existed bars like La Playa Xpu-Ha. It's the kind of place hidden between towns, with flour-white sand instead of a floor, a thatch roof flapping in a sweet breeze. The kind of place for drinking micheladas

all day, staring out at a swath of ocean the color of a Bombay Sapphire bottle. The kind of place so lazy, it has swings instead of barstools. The kind of place that evokes a Corona commercial, but where Corona's considered a tourist's beer. The kind of place you need to be right now. [laplayaxpuha.com](http://laplayaxpuha.com)



## ALL-IN-EXC

VIP ESCORT THROUGH CUSTOMS. \$15,000-PER-NIGHT MANSIONS. TOP-SHELF RUMS ON THE DRINK PLAN. IS **JUMBY BAY** IN ANTIGUA THE WORLD'S MOST ELITE ALL-INCLUSIVE?

STORY BY DAVID LAHUTA



WHEN TO GO

DEC  
TO APRIL

Winter brings mild temps and little to no rain • Spring break here means no coeds and fewer cruise crowds

# LUSIVÉ



The seven-bedroom Bananaquit villa is mere steps from Pasture Beach, but it also has a 50-by-20-foot private saltwater pool just in case you don't want to get sandy.

## RESORT TIP

“Order what’s not on the menu: my Jumby Passion, with Antiguan rum and a secret splash.”

SAYS PATEL, BARTENDER AT JUMBY BAY’S BEACH BAR

**I**t happens all de time.” Like her concierge colleagues, Tatiana is sitting behind one of two side-by-side mahogany desks in an open-air reception area. Tropical artwork hangs from the walls behind her, and in my hand is the fruit fusion of the day: a glass of fresh-pressed mango, papaya and passion-fruit juice that I’ve brought from my beachfront breakfast table a few yards away.

My family and I have just spent three days on Jumby Bay — a private 300-acre island off the northern coast of Antigua — and the thought of leaving tomorrow is not sitting well with us. Even still, I’m not sure why her words sound so surprising. “Really?” I reply with a chuckle. Apparently I’m not the first person to ask for one of the few things that isn’t included at this exclusive all-inclusive resort: another night’s stay. “We can help you, Mr. LaHuta,” she adds. “Not a problem ah-tall.”

Accessible by boat only, Jumby Bay doesn’t have cars, retail stores or even above-ground power lines — and that’s just how the island’s cooperative of owners likes it. In addition to its 56 multimillion-dollar mansions, the co-op also owns the island’s only hotel, the 40-room, 17-villa Rosewood resort where I’m staying with my wife, Joy, and my two sons, Jackson and Tyler. And thanks to a recent \$28 million investment that added two-, five- and

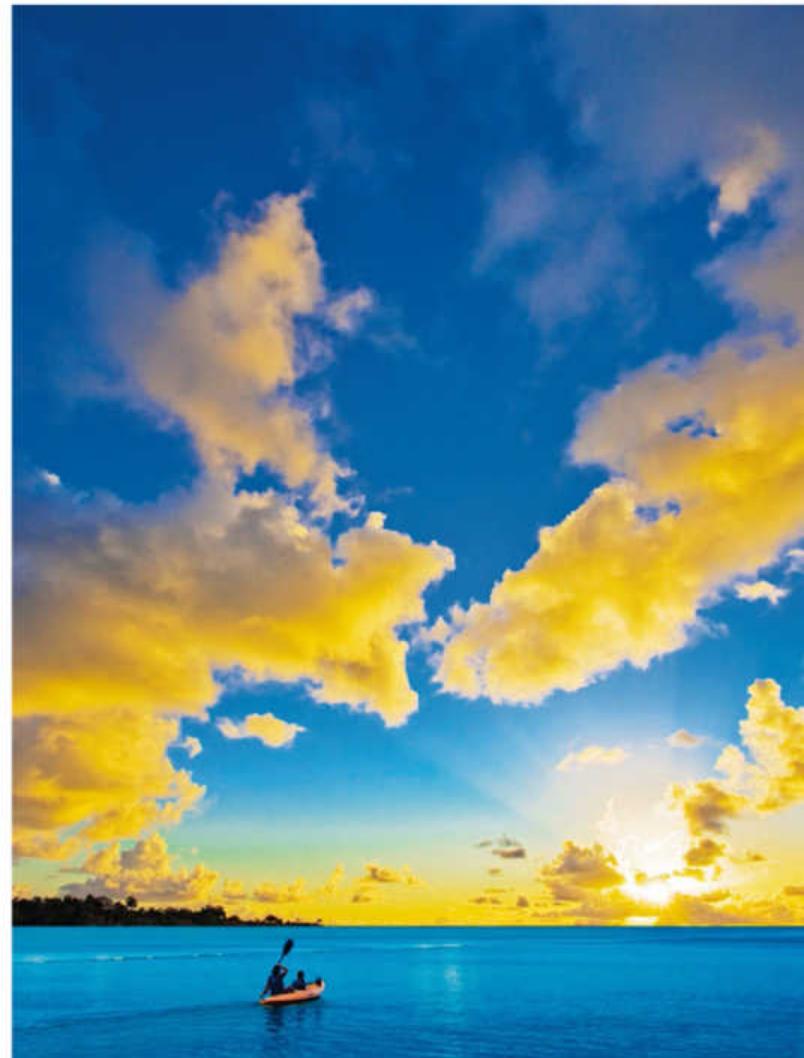
six-bedroom estate homes over the past year — properties with personal chefs, butlers and housekeeping staffs that can be rented for upward of \$15,000 a night — the number of estates available for rent is now 18.

“You get what you pay for,” says Scott D. Berman, a principal at PwC and leader of the firm’s U.S. hospitality and leisure practice. “People equate inclusive properties to being affordable, but at the high end, it’s a different experience.”

It’s one that begins even before stepping foot on Jumby Bay — specifically at V.C. Bird International Airport, Antigua’s brand-new \$97 million terminal where we and a handful of other resort guests are fast-tracked through customs while the remainder of our flight waits in a long, serpentine line. “First time to Jumby?” asks Diana, a cheerful granny who assists me with my paperwork. “Excellent choice,” she says. Minutes later, our bags are loaded into a tinted Chevy Suburban for a seven-minute drive to Jumby Bay’s private ferry. Once on board, it’s a 10-minute crossing to the dock, where we’re greeted with cold lemongrass-scented face towels and craft-rum cocktails.

“Get whichever wine you want at dinner or take lessons on a water sport you’ve never tried, because why not?” says 27-year-old Logan McIntosh, who is honeymooning with her 28-year-old investment banker husband, Tom. “You never regret a decision because you second-guess if it was worth it.”

I’ve run into the affable couple yet again, this time on Jumby Bay’s white-sand beach, where tangerine sea stars wash ashore and a server named Franka doles out homemade strawberry



ice-cream sandwiches to guests lounging under thatch-roof palapas. My kids devour the treats, I toss a starfish back into the sea and Logan gushes about last night’s dinner — one that included two massive lobster tails freshly caught that day. “It wasn’t even on the menu.”

This all-inclusive is just so, well, inclusive. For example,



The three-bedroom Sea Pigeon villa (left) is home base. From there, Jumby Bay's comforts are at your fingertips: weekly rum tastings at the Estate House Bar, sunset kayaking off Jumby Bay Beach and a solo sandbar that begs for a chair.

#### GET HERE

When Antigua's V.C. Bird International Airport opened in July, it ushered in a new era of airlift; the terminal now has the capacity to process 3 million passengers annually, up from 860,000. Now one of the largest hubs in the Caribbean, the airport is busier than ever, with nonstop flights from New York City (American; JetBlue begins Nov. 5), Newark (United), Charlotte (US Airways), Miami (American), Montreal (Air Canada), Toronto (WestJet; Air Canada) and London (British Airways, Virgin Atlantic).



## RESORT TIP

“The only way to see all the million-dollar manses is by hopping on the resort’s powerboat.”

SAYS LOGAN MCINTOSH, JUMBY BAY GUEST

bartender Darren Simpson pours me yet another snifter of English Harbour, an Antiguan sipping rum that’s aged for 10 years in French oak casks and retails for \$193. It’s sitting next to bottles of Hendrick’s gin and Grey Goose vodka at the open-air Verandah Bar. And like the bottle of Rémy Martin cognac that was delivered to my suite when I requested a single glass, they too are included.

“We all aim to please,” says Jumby Bay’s executive chef Sylvain Hervochon, who sources nearly 50 percent of the fruits, vegetables and proteins served in the resort’s three restaurants from local farmers and fishermen. And while he’s also quick to note that cooking in the Caribbean can be tricky due to a lack of resources, the French-trained chef welcomes the challenge.

“Having fewer ingredients at your disposal allows you to be more creative,” he says, a fact that Joy and I experience firsthand during a private moonlit dinner sans kids (the hotel arranges for a sweet-as-pie nanny to watch the boys in our one-bedroom suite).

Ringed by a circle of groomed sand and illuminated by flickering tiki torches, our shell-topped table is staffed by a single waiter who brings us five preselected courses. There’s spicy tuna tartar, savory coconut shrimp,

seared scallops over beds of local greens and spiny lobster tails served Caribbean style, with grilled vegetables and a generous portion of peas and rice. “Just like my mama makes,” says our waiter. Later, a trio of bite-size sweets arrives with glasses of 20-year-old tawny port. OK, so this wasn’t inclusive, but the extra \$245 for our toes-in-the-sand meal was well worth it.

“I hear you’re staying with us another night,” says Melinda, a peppy guest-services specialist who greets us at breakfast the next morning. “It’s your last day, so do everything you can — or do nothing at all,” she says, matter-of-factly.

We opt for the former: I try water skiing for the first time, Joy gets massaged with warm nautilus shells at the spa, and we take meandering rides on fat-tire bikes outfitted with seats for the kids. We also hop aboard *Yennecot*, a 45-foot catamaran (included) that takes us snorkeling on Paradise Reef (included) and to uninhabited Prickly Pear Cay where we sip Chablis and nibble gourmet snacks in solitude (you get the idea).

Back at the resort, Jackson begs for one more dip in our room’s private plunge pool — a late-afternoon swim followed by warm baths in the outdoor soaking tub. It’s almost time for our final dinner, this one inside a 1830s colonial cottage called the Estate House, where the menu changes nightly, but the bill never does — because, of course, there is no bill.

“Should we stay another night?” asks Joy.

“Of course we should,” I say. “Next time we come back.” *From \$1,075 a night, rosewood hotels.com*  **MORE ALL-INC'S:** *islands.com/allincs*

## WHEN TO GO

Jumby Bay’s busiest (read: most expensive) stretch is from Dec. 20 through Easter, when homeowners and hotel guests flock to the island for its low-80s days that are cooled by the trade winds. Save some cash by traveling in June, July and August, when temperatures are only slightly hotter and the rates are at their lowest. **Tip:** Avoid traveling the last week of April when hotel rooms and airfare skyrocket during Antigua Sailing Week.





Kids gather at the dock to take part in Jumby Bay's Rose Buds program, where they can "adopt" a turtle and track its progress. The La Casa villa (below) doesn't come cheap, at \$11,000 a night in high season.



# NEW AT SEA FOR 2016

No, we didn't put the wrong photo here. That's not a villa or a resort — it's a cruise ship, and on the other side of that infinity pool is really the ocean. It's time to set sail.

BY BROOKE MORTON



*Explorer*, Regent Seven Seas' newest ship

## 1. NEW OVERNIGHTS

### *Celebrity Cruises*

Typically, cruising means no happy hours, sunsets or even dinners on dry land. Starting January 2016, Celebrity Cruises will give guests aboard 43 Caribbean itineraries, each 10 nights or longer, the chance to overnight in ports such as Aruba, Barbados, Cozumel, Curaçao, St. Maarten and Cartagena, Colombia. So go ahead — make a dinner reservation at Yemanja Woodfired Grill on Aruba, and keep the party going on St. Maarten, stopping by Kali's Beach Bar for a shot of local-fruit-infused rum. [celebritycruises.com](http://celebritycruises.com)

## 2. NEW SPA

### *Canyon Ranch SpaClub*

The newest ship in the Regent Seven Seas Cruises' fleet, the 750-passenger *Explorer* — setting sail July 20, 2016, from

Monte Carlo — will debut a Canyon Ranch SpaClub, hailed by company president Jason Montague as “the most luxurious at sea.” On deck five, it will feature an infrared sauna, aromatic steam room, a cold room designed to re-create the effect of icy swims, eight treatment rooms and an outdoor infinity-edge plunge pool. The new menu takes inspiration from across the globe: Atlantic Ocean sea salts are used in an exfoliating treatment, and a body cleanse features Moroccan mint tea and silt for detoxifying. These treatments will premiere on *Explorer* before transitioning to other ships in the fleet. [rssc.com](http://rssc.com)

## 3. NEW PORT

### *Montserrat*

Since the 1995 volcanic eruption, no cruise ship has returned to the Lesser Antilles island of Montserrat

... until now. Starting Dec. 5, 2015, Windstar Cruises' *Star Legend*, which debuted in May, will stop at the new capital and port, Little Bay, which can welcome small ships only. Choose the Insights of Montserrat excursion, part of the San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands itinerary, to tour local villages and witness the long reach of the lava. [windstarcruises.com](http://windstarcruises.com)

## 4. NEW PORT

### *Martinique*

In early 2016, *Disney Wonder*, leaving from San Juan, Puerto Rico, will tour the Southern Caribbean, introducing a new stop at the French island of Martinique. Hailed as the “Flower of the Caribbean,” Martinique offers rainforest hikes and waterfall pool swims. The all-new itinerary will visit Barbados, Grenada, Antigua and St. Kitts. [disneycruises.com](http://disneycruises.com)

NEW  
CRUISE  
SHIPS

### *Norwegian Escape*

It's home to the first at-sea Margaritaville bar and the new Waterfront, an open-air promenade leading to the Food Republic; order Asian-fusion cuisine via iPads.

CHOOSE FROM  
120 BOTTLES OF  
WINE ON ESCAPE

### *Encore*

Seabourn's newest ship sails Dec. 4, 2016, and it will be the largest in the small-ship fleet. Restaurateur Thomas Keller, of California's The French Laundry, brings his famed fare on board.



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## VACATION RENTALS

27. **Antigua Village Beach Resort** - Antigua - [PAGE 79](#)
28. **Cayo Espanto** - Belize - [PAGE 79](#)

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## 1 INFINITY POOL

The cascading pool at Gansevoort Dominican Republic Playa Imbert and the Atlantic Ocean are like neighboring hues on a Benjamin Moore paint swatch. With only 48 suites and a private beach, the chance of anyone interrupting your view is slim.



## A VIEW FROM ANYWHERE

Pool time, bath time, dinnertime. Waking up from a night's sleep or an alfresco nap. Everywhere you go, you're in a three-dimensional screensaver. This customized creation, built from five hotels and resorts in four time zones, puts a premium on panorama.

Good morning, Piti and Gros Piton, a vista made possible by the exposed fourth wall, a trademark of Jade Mountain in Saint Lucia. Better snap your photos in the room, as guests are asked (kindly) not to use their phones in the resort's public areas.

#### 2 BED



#### 3 CABANA

Behind you, dense rainforest thicket. In front of you, the Gulf of Thailand. Song Saa, a private island resort in Cambodia, mixes hospitality with sustainability. (Its mantra: "Luxury that treads lightly.") So yes, the daybed is made from locally sourced materials.



#### 4 TUB

Opt for the superior double room at Hacienda Na Xamena in Ibiza. The main attraction is a Jacuzzi 60 stories above the Med that settles at the foot of the sunburnt rock faces.



#### 5 RESTAURANT

At Ithaa Undersea Restaurant at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, the six-course prix fixe dinner takes place 16 feet below sea level next to the coral gardens. That was a whitetip shark that just crept by. Now back to the lobster carpaccio.

# 5 Seasonal Getaways in the U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

*Escape to the Caribbean this fall for carnivals, mocko jumbies, regattas and more*

## 1. Weekly Carnivals

*Wednesday night is Carnival Extravaganza Night at Bolongo Bay Beach Resort on St. Thomas. The party kicks off with Calypso music and a stilt-walking mocko jumbie, who wears a mask to scare spirits away. The excitement continues with dance and limbo contests, and a firewalker. But, no extravaganza is complete without a taste from the Caribbean buffet and a bucket of Bolongo's signature VooDoo juice.*  
[bolongobay.com](http://bolongobay.com)



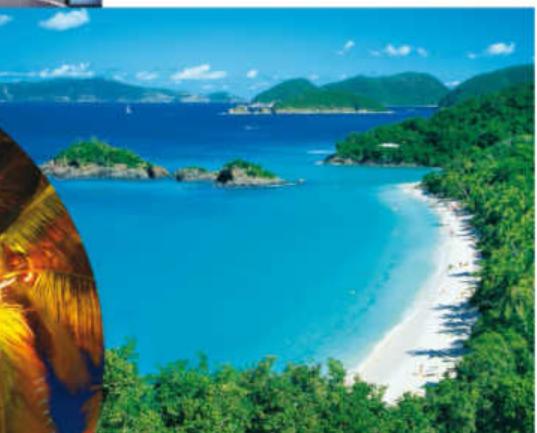
## 2. OFFSHORE ADVENTURES

Test your luck at breaking one of USVI's two-dozen world records for historic catches. Charter a captain to fish for sailfish, mahimahi, tuna or wahoo — whose seasons kick off in the fall — or compete for cash in the annual Wahoo Windup. St. John's Coral Bay Thanksgiving Regatta, an annual celebration for more than three decades, is world-renowned for island-hopping sailing. Not a sailor? Cheer on the contestants, then head to the afterparty at Skinny Legs Bar and Grill.

## 3. NONSTOP SERVICE

Not ready to say goodbye to summer? There's no need to when airlines are offering direct flights to St. Thomas from major hubs like Atlanta, Houston, Charlotte, Miami and New York, to name a few. Go zip lining, sky diving or parasailing in this adventure mecca. Or, for a more relaxing getaway, check out the white sands of Magens Bay or the seclusion of Vessup Bay.

◀ **4. Discounted Stays**  
*Whether you're traveling with friends or family, the Westin St. John Resort and Villas offers your group more space, more amenities and more discounts this fall. Pamper your party with beachside dining, classic Caribbean cuisine at Lemongrass Restaurant, the Westin Workout Spa and villas with multiple bedrooms and full kitchens. Plus, enjoy 20% off select nights for the rest of the year. [westin.com/stjohnvillas](http://westin.com/stjohnvillas)*



## 5. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

A tradition since 1952, the monthlong Crucian Christmas Carnival celebrates St. Croix's history and culture through parades, pageants, concerts, crafts, local food and more. Beginning the first Saturday in December and ending the first Sunday of the new year, dancers fill the streets until the wee hours of the morning wearing vibrant, homemade costumes and performing traditional Crucian routines.



# CHEAT SHEET

## ***How to Find a Guide***

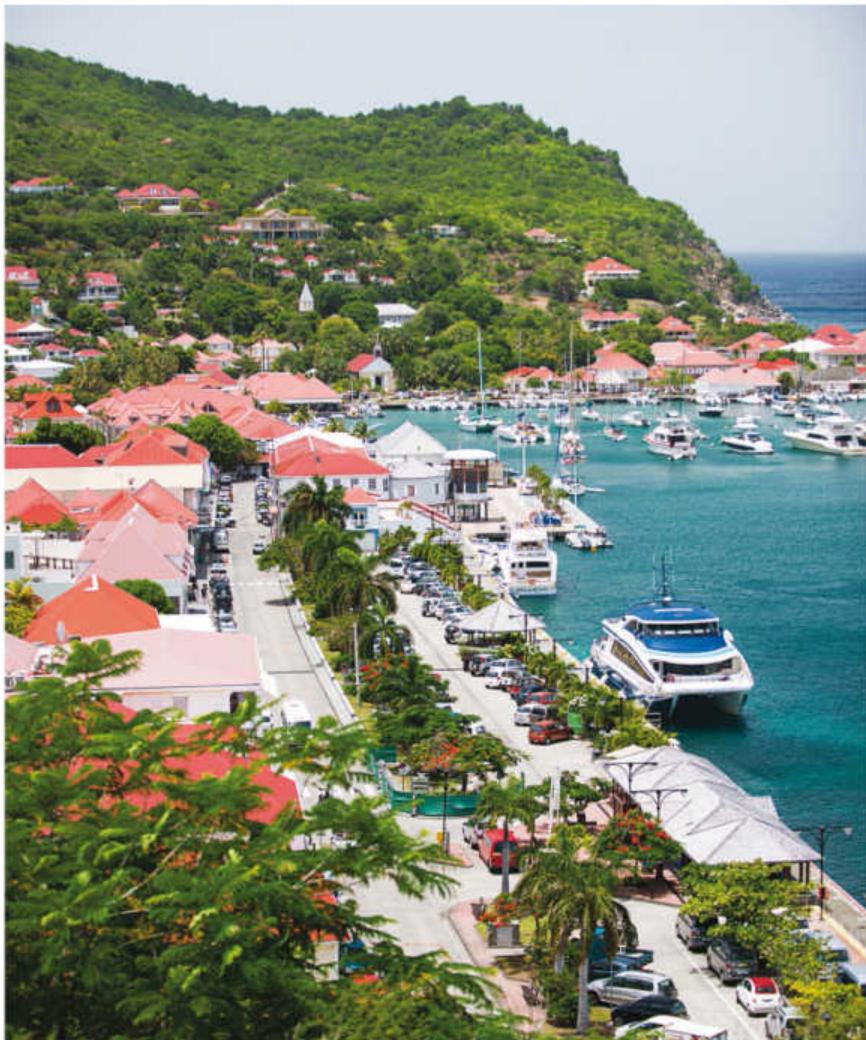
Former foreign correspondent Jad Davenport on how to find your “fixer”



**1 GO PRO** Contact a guiding outfit that will connect you with a vetted local guide who has a professional background in your field of interest. For example, Context Travel, which specializes in city tours, will arrange for an art professor to tell you everything about those oil paintings in Venice. [contexttravel.com](http://contexttravel.com)

**2 FIND MOONLIGHTERS** You'll meet some of the best potential guides while they're already on duty, like rangers in national parks and curators at museums. See if they might be willing to take you out on one of their days off as a freelance guide. Ask about their hourly rate and whether they have a vehicle (with seatbelts).

**3 PLAY FAIR** It's fine to negotiate rates, but an experienced guide will more than make up for their higher cost by what they'll save you in time, energy and expenses. They can arrange for special museum entry or take you to the home of a local artisan to purchase souvenirs. Don't forget to tip: 15 to 20 percent is customary.



## HOW TO FERRY-HOP

BY JAD DAVENPORT

Want to explore more than one Caribbean country over a few days without going by cruise ship? Locals do it all the time, which is why ferry-hopping your way through the Lesser Antilles — where interisland flights can be pricey and dicey, as anyone who's landed at St. Barts or Saba can attest — is both an affordable and immersive way to go. There are practical ferries — like those linking the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, and St. Maarten to St. Barts (a godsend for nervous fliers) — but to make a true multi-country journey, head to the hub of ferry travel, the French territory of Guadeloupe.

A voyage aboard one of L'Express des Iles' fast ferries stops at four Windward Islands in just a matter of hours. Guadeloupe to Dominica takes under two hours, Martinique is another 90 minutes, while Saint Lucia is reached after 3½ hours. Catch morning departures — the international flights haven't arrived yet, so the passenger vibe is mostly local — and plan to overnight at each stop. Sure, cruise ships are more luxurious and can string together more countries, and interisland flights are quicker, but to really get under the skin of the place, there's no better way than spending some time shoulder to shoulder with islanders watching as their countries rise up from the horizon like the morning sun.

**GOOD TO KNOW: SMALLER FERRIES GET WET FAST FROM SEA SPRAY, SO BRING A FEW GARBAGE BAGS FOR YOUR LUGGAGE (AND A PONCHO FOR YOURSELF)**

DO'S  
&  
DON'TS

**1.** DO: Strike up conversations with your fellow passengers. You'll learn more about the islands, and you just might be invited to a family celebration like a birthday or even a wedding.

**2.** DON'T: Be on a tight schedule in autumn; that's when many ferry companies dry-dock some of their ships for repairs.

**3.** DO: Be on time for departure. The ferries are unusually prompt about casting off their lines.

**4.** DO: Get a friend who speaks French to help you wade through the L'Express website (or work with a local travel agent).

**5.** DO: Bring food and drink with you. You'll save money, and nothing breaks the ice better than offering a fellow passenger some chips or sweets.

**6.** DO: Follow local mothers to the best seats. There's a reason empty seats are on the port (or starboard) side — it will either be unbearably hot later in the day, or the seats will be drenched in sea spray.



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# TOP SHOTS

From ethereal portraits to colorful landscapes, the submissions in our 26th annual *Islands* Photo Contest couldn't have been more different, and that made the judging tough. Here's who took home the prizes.



## GRAND PRIZE, CHRIS HOWARD, Kauai

"A windless morning in Hanalei Bay meant this was going to be a good day at work. Yep, this is my seasonal job — to take people on tours with Na Pali Catamaran. Just as the sun peeked out over the mountains, a spinner dolphin — they're often regulars on my trip up the coast — heads for the surface. Not until this moment had I ever nailed the timing." **SHOT WITH:** GoPro Hero3+ **PRIZE:** Four-night stay at Aston Waikiki, plus airfare for two from Alaska Airlines



### EXPERT TIP

Getting down to the dolphin's level makes this shot more engaging than shooting from above.

2

**SECOND PRIZE,  
PAUL ZIZKA, Niue**

"We quickly realized that the terrain on this hike wasn't exactly baby-friendly, so I had to return to the Talava Arches later that night, which turned out to be the perfect time. It was like my own personal magical mystery tour." **SHOT WITH:** Canon 5D3, 17-40mm, with an intervalometer lens **PRIZE:** Three-night stay at Little Palm Island, Florida, including daily breakfast

**EXPERT TIP**

In landscapes, people give a sense of scale. No one around? Use a tripod and be your own model.



3

**EXPERT TIP**

Look for objects like the soccer net that are not only a storytelling element, but also frame the shot.

**THIRD PRIZE, STEVE JOH, Roatan, Honduras**

"I love soccer; as a traveler, it's truly a global pastime. A few friends and I happened upon this tiny park where local kids had just started a game; they asked if we'd like to join. The rule was if you scored, you got to stay in. We scored and played about 15 times. Standing back and seeing that light made me grab my camera. Feeling the energy and seeing the camaraderie made me wish the moment wouldn't end." **SHOT WITH:** Nikon d100 **PRIZE:** Four-night all-inclusive stay at St. James's Club, Antigua

**ARTISTIC MERIT,  
STEVE TAYLOR,  
Big Island, Hawaii**

"The most enchanting thing about the Big Island is that it has every kind of landscape imaginable all in one place—from rainforests and waterfalls to black volcanoes, white beaches and green mountains. Seeing molten lava flowing had always been a dream of mine, and now I was here. I used a slow shutter speed to blur the motion of the water and the lava, but even without that effect, this landscape was beautifully haunting." **SHOT WITH:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III **PRIZE:** A weeklong photo workshop at Maine Media Workshops

**EXPERT TIP**

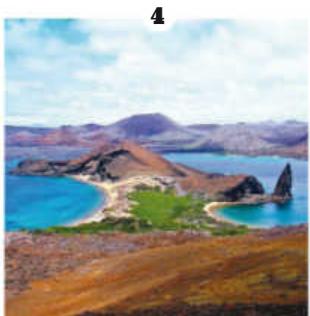
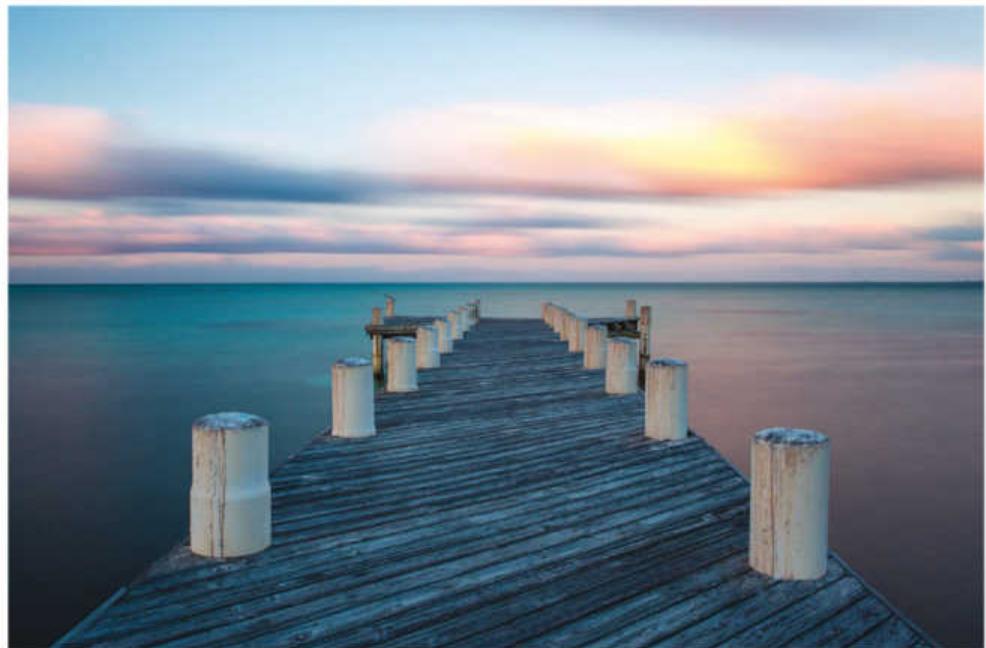
Long exposures make for cool lava and water effects, but remember: Safety first!



**READERS CHOICE**  
**WINNER, KEVIN**  
**MICHAEL SNYDER,**  
*Turks and Caicos*

“On the second night of our vacation, my wife and I were having dinner at Grace Bay Beach when an earth shadow started to settle in above the clouds, creating a sherbet-like painting on the sky. It took about 30 minutes to get the image from setup to tear-down, with a series of five frames. I love how the dock shoots straight into it, like it's inviting you into heaven.”

**SHOT WITH:** Canon 5D Mark III, EF17-40 f/4L lens **PRIZE:** SeaLife Micro HD+ camera



**READERS CHOICE NOMINEES**

**1.** Galapagos, Michele Belanger-McNair **2.** Huahine, Peter Toth **3.** Oahu, Jeffrey Mallin **4.** Galapagos, Brian Ward **5.** Bahamas, Sharon Kirchner **6.** Puerto Rico, Dan Banfe **7.** Iceland, Claudia Cooper **8.** Galapagos, Michele Belanger-McNair

## Photo Tips

## ELEVATE THE SELFIE

BY JON WHITTLE

A quick search of the hashtag "#selfie" on Instagram netted 291 million images. But quantity doesn't always equal quality. On your next trip, give your selfies a professional polish.

**See the light.** The best bet for a flattering photo is soft, indirect light (like light coming through a window) or open shade. Avoid settings where a bright light source is behind you, where your face is in partial or broken light, or in too dark a space.

**Create some distance.** It doesn't say much about where you are if all we can see is an eyeball. Especially with travel-centric selfies, where the destination is an important supporting character, tripods, selfie sticks and self timers allow you to escape from the arm-length photo and reveal more of the environment.



**Watch your background.** As with any form of photography, beware of tunnel vision. It's far too easy to focus on your face without taking a second to scan the edges of the frame for any distracting elements. That shot of you in front of Mount Otemanu in Bora Bora might be epic, but if a row of garbage cans appears in the corner of it, it probably won't end up on your wall.

**Involve the locals.** A huge part of travel is the people you meet. Photographing yourself with locals tells a much richer visual story and will inspire more interest (aka likes) when shared.

## SELFIE IMPROVEMENT

**GorillaPod:** This handy and flexible tripod can wrap around objects or stand on a tabletop to make timed selfies a breeze. It's also small enough to stow in a backpack. \$29



**Loq G Selfie Stick:** For smartphones only, these sticks connect to your phone's headphone jack with a small wire built in next to the clamp that holds your device. No batteries, no Bluetooth. \$25



**Phantom 3 Drone:** Heard of Dronies? You will soon. GoPro, Canon and Nikon are working on drones for the consumer market, ensuring dronies will be the next big thing in the selfie universe. \$1,000



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In Season

## CARAMBOLA (star fruit)

The carambola tree isn't native to the Caribbean — it was introduced by traders from the Far East — but similar climates and a penchant for produce mean the fruit has thrived in its new home. In the fall, carambola, more commonly known stateside as star fruit, is abundant throughout the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. Slice it (on the hemisphere, of course), sprinkle on a little chili powder and coarse sea salt, and you've got a snack that reflects the flavor profiles of those islands: sweet, salty and spicy. — *Holly V. Kapherr*

### STAR FRUIT SALAD

Fresh sliced star fruit  
Local mesclun mixed greens  
Sliced cucumbers  
Grape tomatoes  
Crumbled feta cheese  
Pickled red onion  
Star fruit vinaigrette  
(recipe below)

### STAR FRUIT VINAIGRETTE

1 cup star fruit (peeled, diced and seeded)  
¼ cup guava juice  
¼ cup rice vinegar

2 limes (zested and juiced)  
2 tbs. honey  
1 tbs. Dijon mustard  
1 cup salad oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

1) Puree all ingredients (except oil) in blender until smooth.  
2) Reduce speed of blender and slowly pour in oil. Once the mixture reaches an emulsified consistency, stop adding oil. (Depending on your star fruit's juiciness, you might need more or less oil.)

3) Assemble salad and drizzle with vinaigrette.

### HOW TO KNOW IF YOUR STAR FRUIT IS RIPE

Pick one mostly yellow with some hints of light green and some browning around the edges. Leave it on the counter a few days to sweeten.



Bring It Home



## CAYMAN LEMONADE

The last seconds of golden light slip past Grand Cayman's horizon as I savor the last few sips of summer. Sand stuck to my feet, I bid farewell to my buddy Marty, Calico Jack's bartender. He scribbles a recipe on a napkin. It's the only way I can take Cayman Lemonade home with me. — *Zach Stovall*

### CAYMAN LEMONADE RECIPE

2 oz. vodka  
1 oz. peach schnapps  
1 oz. triple sec  
½ oz. cranberry juice  
½ oz. sweet and sour mix  
Splash of soda  
Squeeze of fresh lime juice  
Mix together, serve over ice and garnish with a lime wedge.

See it made firsthand at [islands.com/videos](http://islands.com/videos).

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aric Islands. <sup>p. 54</sup> Stroll the world's first floating boardwalk on the Norwegian *Escape*. <sup>p. 66</sup>



See Bermuda by **flyboard**. <sup>p. 22</sup> Dine on lobster carpaccio while sharks swim past your head. <sup>p. 69</sup> Try a **drink**  **recipe** scribbled onto a cocktail napkin by a Caymanian bartender. <sup>p. 79</sup>

Visit four Caribbean nations on one ferry. <sup>p. 72</sup>

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